



INDEPENDENT

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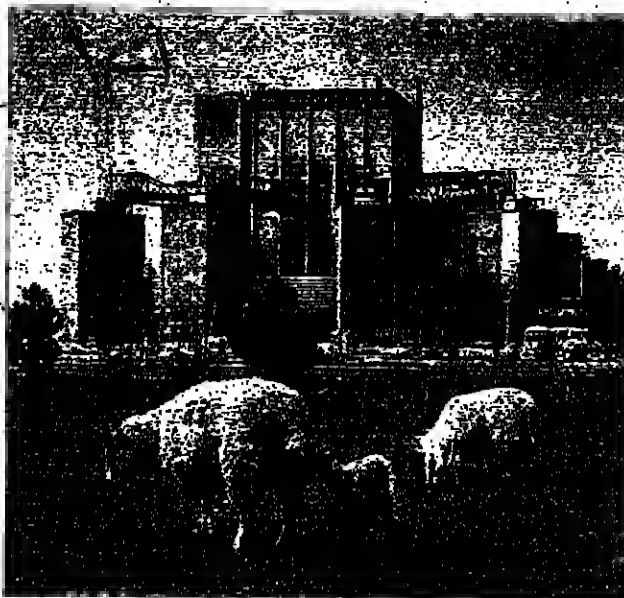
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Britain's nuclear era comes to an end



First: Berkeley, in Gloucestershire, opened in July 1962

Hinkley and Sizewell stations are scrapped

MARY FAGAN and CHARLES ARTHUR

Britain's nuclear power industry faces extinction following the decision by British Energy, the soon-to-be privatised nuclear company, to abandon plans to build any new generating plants. The decision sounded the death knell for nuclear power in Britain. Environmentalists warned that the future for the industry lies in cleaning up the legacy of radioactive waste created by its 50-year failed experiment.

But an independent expert warned that the decision could jeopardise safety in the industry. "In any industry that is shrinking it's hard to keep morale high," said Professor Ian Fells of Newcastle University. "I worry about retaining the culture of safety in those circumstances."

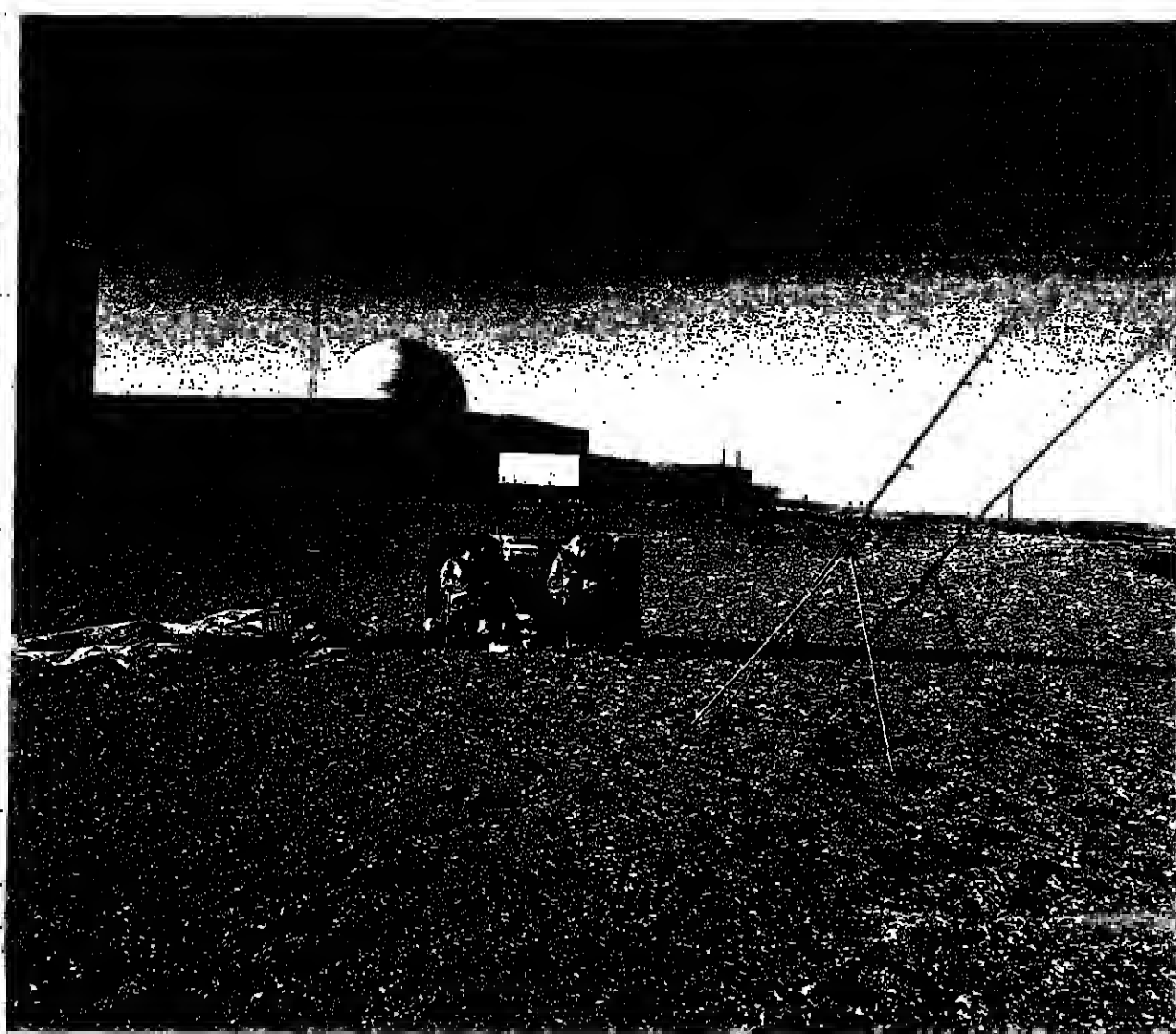
The decision will also have a dramatic impact on the construction industry, which had looked forward to the creation of more than 10,000 jobs lasting up to five years in building the two plants that had been

given planning permission. Dr Robert Hawley, British Energy's chief executive, said that the decision not to go ahead with Sizewell C in Suffolk or Hinkley C in Somerset was taken on the grounds that they would not be commercially viable.

He blamed the excess generating capacity in the UK and a cap on prices in the electricity trading system imposed by the regulator, Professor Stephen Littlechild.

Britain's first commercial nuclear power plant opened at Berkeley, in Gloucestershire, in July 1962, a 167 megawatt Magnox plant which closed in March of 1989. The most recently opened, the 1,258 megawatt pressurised water reactor (PWR) at Sizewell B, started operations in February this year and is expected to operate until 2045.

Bridge Woodman of the environmental group Greenpeace welcomed the decision and said: "British Energy has finally accepted what everyone else has realised for the past six or seven years. No one in their right minds would put money into



Last: The pressurised water reactor plant at Sizewell B, which opened in February

Photograph: Brian Harris

building a new nuclear power station when they are so risky financially and environmentally."

However, Dr Hawley said that he is convinced that in the future there will be a case for new nuclear plants as the price of gas - now widely used in power stations - rises and as people are persuaded they can help in the fight against the greenhouse effect.

At present there are 16 nuclear power stations in Britain, employing 9,700 people. They provide almost 30 per cent of Britain's electricity, supplemented by the effective output of two more nuclear power stations

in France via an undersea cable.

Unions said that the decision "has realised the worst fears of the trade unions representing workers in the nuclear generating industry."

Tony Cooper, secretary of the Electricity Supply Trade Union Council, said that British jobs and expertise are now at risk, adding: "Throwing in the towel on a new nuclear build even before privatisation has taken place clearly signals British Energy's intention to concentrate on alternative methods of electricity generation in the interests of short term profit."

The £3bn Sizewell C station, based on the same Pressurised Water Reactor technology as the recently completed Sizewell B, would have taken seven years to build and created up to 6,000 construction jobs in the area. It could also have created many thousands of jobs throughout the country. The new station at Hinkley, for which planning permission has already been given and was expected to cost £1.9bn, could have created an estimated 4,000 construction jobs over a six-year period.

One City analyst said that the decision to abandon new nuclear build could reduce the Government's revenues from the privatisation, which is at present expected to raise between £2.5bn and £3bn.

Dr Hawley rejected speculation that the company now plans to diversify into gas, saying that over-capacity in the generating market and the low prices in the market makes any new plants unviable at present. But he said that British Energy is becoming a supplier of electricity to the end-user and is "thinking about" the possibility of buying a regional electricity firm.

Analysis, page 2

Blair plan for elected city bosses

DONALD MACINTYRE
Political Editor

A radical overhaul of Prime Minister's Question Time and the first-ever introduction of directly elected city mayors are at the centre of a sweeping new agenda for political reform which Tony Blair, the Labour leader, is intending to unveil between now and the general election.

Mr Blair revealed in an interview with the *Independent* that he favours replacing the twice-weekly Commons Question Time - including the "ah-sord" ritual - under which questions are put - as part of a big shake-up of "antiquated and out-of-touch" parliamentary procedures.

And he disclosed that he was strongly warning to the idea that Labour should bring in powerful, directly elected mayors for big cities - including London - in a move to restore public interest in town hall politics and act as a "modern symbol of local government."

European and US practice by introducing city mayors that it could play a vital role in what he wanted to see as a full-scale "revival of local government."

He acknowledged that a proposal for directly elected mayors would meet opposition from some Labour councillors and insisted that no final decisions had been made. But he added: "The party is discussing the proposal and I don't want to shut that discussion down. But I think we need to have a modern symbol of local government."

He declared: "My commitment to changing politics to a



Blair: Wants new culture

new and different politics is vital. I want to change the political culture of Britain. It is old-fashioned and out of date."

Mr Blair said that his proposed shake-up of Commons Question Time was part of a wider range of changes to Parliamentary procedures which included the way in which bills passed through the Commons. He said he wanted to see many more special standing committees of the kind he abhoritively suggested to John Major should consider the present Asylum and Immigration Bill.

Mr Blair also gave a hint that he might not insist on all Cabinet ministers voting the same way in the referendum on electoral reform he has promised for the next Parliament.

Full interview, page 19

Branson bribes storm grows

REBECCA FOWLER

Peter Davis, the head of the National Lottery watchdog, threatened legal action against Richard Branson yesterday in the growing row over allegations of an attempted bribe in the bidding for the lottery.

The dispute erupted after Mr Branson alleged in a *Panorama* programme last night that the boss of a US company with a stake in the National Lottery operator, Camelot, offered him a bribe to pull out of the race to run the lottery. He said he had told Mr Davis about the alleged bribery attempt.

Mr Davis, director-general of

Oflot, denied he was told of the alleged meeting in September 1993 between Mr Branson, chairman of the Virgin group, and Guy Snowden, chairman of Oflot, the American Lottery equipment company that has a 22.5 per cent stake in Camelot.

Mr Branson claims he was offered the inducement to withdraw from the bidding process after it was revealed his own bid would be non-profit-making.

Oflot issued a statement yesterday, before last night's *Panorama* broadcast, saying: "Mr Branson's statement is untrue; any suggestion Mr Branson mentioned the allegation to Mr Davis, and he ignored such

an allegation of impropriety, impugns the integrity of the director-general," Oflot said. "Accordingly Oflot is consulting legal advisors." Oflot is also considering legal action.

Mr Snowden has sent a letter to Mr Davis demanding an emergency enquiry.

But a spokesman for Mr Branson said he would welcome a legal challenge. He said Mr Branson was considering legal action against Oflot for suggesting he was lying. "This meeting was the main thing that tipped Richard's decision to put together a charitable consortium for the bid; he felt so strongly about it.

"We would welcome a legal action from Oflot, and we would look forward to taking them to court."

The allegations have been denied by Camelot, which is making profits of £1m a week from the National Lottery.

Mr Davis repeated his denial of knowledge about the allegations yesterday to the Public Accounts Committee, a Government body, at a meeting at the House of Commons.

Panorama also said last night Oflot is the subject of FBI investigations concerning alleged bribes paid to officials in California, Kentucky and New Jersey with state lottery contracts.

New jail sentences for knife offences

Offenders caught carrying knives will face three month jail sentences and larger fines, under tougher sentences revealed in a confidential Home Office letter obtained by the *Independent*, writes Jason Bennetto.

The stiffer penalties are expected to be included in a forthcoming White Paper on sentencing and come after the murder of headmaster Philip Lawrence, who was stabbed to death outside his school in London.

Michael Howard, the Home Secretary, wants to increase the current law on carrying "an article with a blade or point in

a public place," which carries a maximum fine of £1,000.

Under the proposals, which have the backing of police chiefs, prison sentences of up to three months and maximum fines of £2,400 are to be introduced for knife carrying offences.

Pupils returned to St George's school, in Maida Vale, north-west London yesterday for the first day since the fatal stabbing on Friday. Cardinal Basil Hume conducted mass at the Roman Catholic school and counsellors helped children cope with their grief.

Stiffer penalties, page 4

IN BRIEF

Pearson shake-up
Pearson, the media conglomerate, is expected to announce a radical boardroom shake-up that could be a prelude to making TV mogul Greg Dyke, its new chief executive. Page 20

Whale case ruling
A British journalist who exposed the electrocution of Antarctic minke whales is likely to lose a £260,000 court case. Page 7

Better by degrees
Graduates are challenging the workaholic lifestyle of their predecessors as their job prospects improve. Page 8

THE REV ANDREW BROWN
Religious Affairs Correspondent

The Universal Life Church of Modesto, California, is an un-demanding religion. It will ordain "anyone that asks, without question of faith, for life, and without fee." It will even do so over the Internet, which is how I found myself yesterday afternoon legally licensed to conduct baptisms, funerals and weddings in the state of California.

The secret to the Church's growth - it claims 14 million ministers around the world - is

not just the cheapness and ease of its licensing process: it took me five minutes from first dialling into the Internet to the moment when my certificate of ordination whispered out of a laser printer. There is also a gratifying doctrinal laxity. "Individual Christians and other believers must be free to practise their faith in whatever manner they believe necessary, commensurate with their not violating the same freedom of others" according to the statement of my new Internet beliefs.

The Universal Life Church, claims to have members of

every religion in its ranks. The mother church building, in Modesto, only seats 200. But this hardly matters when they have the whole of the World Wide Web to run around. A full-time staff of six (all ordained) can thus ignore the bitterly contested market of spiritual seekers who are looking for someone to follow. Instead, the Universal Life Church can exploit the longing in all of us to be spiritual leaders.

All this is not entirely idealistic. Ministers of religion are afforded respect in the US and the perks can be worth having.

One Roman Catholic diocese has run a campaign to recruit priests on the slogan "Eat free in Italian restaurants for life".

My ordination material explained that "Ministers are entitled to many discounts from retail agencies and various other trade entities and services. Among these are discounts on buses, trains, air travel, department store discounts, food discounts, retail and restaurant chains." Perhaps most useful are discounts at amusement parks.

"The minister may obtain discounts on his own REMEMBER, ask and they may grant it."

There are also tax concessions. You don't need to be on the net to obtain these delights. US readers may call a toll-free number, or even use the post. If I send the mother church \$35 I can register my own congregation and start ordaining everyone in the newsroom without Internet access.



THE FAMOUS GROUSE
FINEST SCOTCH WHISKY

Indians kill leader of kidnap group

TIM MCGIRK
New Delhi

In a possible breakthrough in the Kashmiri hostage saga, the Indian army has killed the hard-line leader of the rebel group that has been holding two Britons, a German and an American hostage for more than five months.

In a communiqué issued yesterday in Srinagar, capital of the disputed state of Kashmir, the rebel group al-Faran acknowledged that Abdul Hamid al-Turki, its commander-in-chief, died on Monday week in a gun battle with Indian troops. Official

sources described al-Turki as "hard core" and "the least flexible" of the al-Faran guerrilla commanders.

Al-Faran said that after the shoot-out, the army had "arrested" three of the Western hostages while the fourth had "gone missing". This was categorically denied by the Indian government spokesman, Ram Mohan Rao. "It's absolutely false. The hostages were nowhere near the operation carried out by the army," he said. Western diplomats had earlier secured a promise from the Indian security forces to avoid rescue operations which

might endanger the captives' lives. This promise is still in force, government officials said.

The rebel claim that they had "lost" the hostages to the Indians - and the Indian denial - led to fears that they might have been harmed in retaliation for al-Turki's death. But police officials say the four fair-skinned hostages, disguised in Kashmiri robes, were spotted by villagers on Sunday not far from Anantnag, a town in southern Kashmir, several days after the firefight in which al-Turki died.

The hostages were said to be in good shape but guarded by at least 16 gunmen. A month

ago, al-Faran abducted a doctor to care for the four, one of whom was said to be suffering from severe frostbite after being forced to march through blizzards.

The death of al-Turki is a hard blow to the Kashmiri rebels, official sources said in New Delhi. Three other rebels, wounded and captured in the same battle, told army interrogators that the surviving kidnappers were tired and anxious. Now they have no commander.

"The militants said there was a possibility that the abductors might either abandon the hostages or hand them over to

another militant group who would release them," an official said. India accuses Pakistan of covertly aiding al-Faran and other Kashmiri rebel factions.

Indian officials said that on 4 December the al-Faran chief and seven of his men had left the hostages under guard several kilometres away, near an abandoned tourist resort at Kokamag, to come down the mountains, either for supplies or to link up with other rebels, when they were ambushed by an army patrol. "The hostages were nowhere near," Mr Rao insisted.

Al-Faran's claims yesterday that at least three of the Westerners were being secretly held in custody by the Indian army has left many observers baffled. "We don't know if there's anything substantive that has happened after the death of al-Turki or whether it's just both sides - the Indians and al-Faran - jostling for position," one observer said.

Explicitly, al-Faran released a second contradictory communiqué yesterday in which it renewed its death threat against the hostages. The group is demanding that India free 15 jailed Kashmiri militants in exchange for two Britons, Paul Wells and Keith Mangan, along with American Donald Hutchings and German Dirk Hasert.

The four were trekking in the Himalayas last summer when they were kidnapped by al-Faran, one of many armed Muslim separatist groups leading an uprising against Indian rule in the Himalayan state. More than 20,000 people have been killed since the revolt flared six years ago.

"The kidnappers are trying one last attempt to get their men freed," an Indian official said, "but we think it's encouraging that the al-Faran are clearly trying to keep the hostages alive."

But if the campaigners, who allege that proposed cuts to service were unlawful, fail, Roger Salmon, the franchising director will announce later today that Stagecoach, Britain's biggest bus company, has won one of the first two franchises to be let, South West Trains, and also that London, Tilbury and Southend, has gone to a management buy-out team.

IN BRIEF

Judges to rule on rail sell-off

Three Appeal Court judges could stop the progress of passenger rail privatisation today when they rule on a case brought by the Save Our Railways campaign which could force the Government to start the whole process again.

But if the campaigners, who allege that proposed cuts to service were unlawful, fail, Roger Salmon, the franchising director will announce later today that Stagecoach, Britain's biggest bus company, has won one of the first two franchises to be let, South West Trains, and also that London, Tilbury and Southend, has gone to a management buy-out team.

Guppy rearrested

Darius Guppy, freed on bail last Thursday, was rearrested after a High Court judge in London revoked his bail. Guppy, 30, who served five years for a bogus gems robbery, will remain in custody pending a 19 December hearing of his appeal against an extra three years in jail for failing to pay compensation to Lloyd's insurers.

Blow to galleries

Timothy Clifford, director of the National Galleries of Scotland, launched a stinging attack on a "scandalous" cut by the Scottish Office to the galleries' grant for next year. The 1996-7 grant is to be £660,000, as opposed to the 1995-6 figure of £1,318,000, which was a cut from the previous year's grant of £1.8m. Mr Clifford, who helped bring Canova's *Three Graces* to Scotland, said: "We were a national gallery in a capital city but now our budget is not even in the range of a provincial city."

Brent Spar report

Shell's redundant Brent Spar oil platform contained no significant quantities of toxic, long-lasting PCB chemicals, according to a fresh report from the international safety body, Det Norske Veritas. An earlier DNV report said there could be up to 8kg on board in dozens of light fittings.

IRA extradition

A Dublin court ordered the extradition to Britain of Nesson Quinlivan and Pearse McCauley, IRA escapees from Britain prison in south London. Quinlivan, of Limerick, and McCauley, of Co. Tyrone in Northern Ireland, both 30, and wanted since the 1991 escape and British-based terrorism, were arrested by Irish police last month after completing jail terms for firearms offences. Lawyers for the two men said they would be appealing in the Irish High Court.

Prince's car sold

The Prince of Wales's 1987 Aston Martin Vantage-Volant sports car was sold by Christie's for £111,500 to a private British collector at an auction at the RAF Museum in Hendon, north London. The money will go to the Prince's Charity Trust. The teddy bear that accompanied former speed champion Donald Campbell on his successful world record-breaking attempts on land and water failed to meet its estimate.

Tory MP's trial set

Former Tory minister Sir Nicholas Scott pleaded not guilty in his absence to driving with excess alcohol, failing to stop after an accident and driving without due care and attention during a hearing before magistrates in London. The trial date was set for 26 January.

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Tory resignation: Fiftieth member to quit is critical of Government's foreign policy

Tories 'off the rails' says quitting MP

PATRICIA WYNN DAVIES
Political Correspondent

David Howell, the fiftieth Tory to announce his intention of quitting at the next general election, yesterday accused the Government of going "off the rails" over foreign policy and becoming "obsessive" about Europe.

Mr Howell, a senior Tory and chairman of the party's One Nation group of centre-ground MPs, declared that Britain was "too busy running after the French and Germans, and being terrified they are going to pull some trick and we are going to be left behind".

Mr Howell's criticism came 24 hours after the fervently pro-European former prime minister, Sir Edward Heath, pledged to support a future Labour government in Commons votes if it was "doing the right thing" on Europe.

The 59-year-old MP for Guildford since 1966, a former Cabinet minister and current chairman of the Commons Foreign Affairs Select Committee, yesterday insisted his decision to quit was not another chapter in the trend of disillusionment felt by most departing Tories.

"The short answer to why I am standing down is that I have done it for 30 years. It is time I went to new pastures and give my constituents a chance to have a new MP," he said.

The departure of one of the Conservative Party's most trusted elder voices will none the less fuel Mr Major's anxieties over the scale of the planned exodus of senior Tories. For this stage of a parliament, an unprecedented number of MPs have said they will not stand again.

One minister admitted yesterday that there were worries that it was not only MPs in their seventies and sixties who were bailing out, but younger mem-

bers in Mr Howell's league. Mr Howell insisted that there was a stock of able candidates coming in.

He also disagreed with the suggestion by some outgoing colleagues that the House of Commons had been devalued by the culture of the media soundbite. "I think the Commons is more interesting than 30 years ago," he said.

The MP is not among those unhappy about the tightened Nolan rules on outside interests, which could see some MPs' outside earnings evaporate. "The only lobbying I have ever done is on behalf of my constituents," Mr Howell said.

"The fact is that I spent 14 years as a minister, followed by 10 years as a committee chairman. I was not the kind of former Cabinet minister who jumped out into some job. I did provide some aftercare."

Would he have continued to serve for another parliament if a dramatic change in the polls had suggested the Tories could win another election? "I don't think so," he said.

Mr Howell, a pro-European, bitterly disagreed with scepticism, conceding that some power had been lost to Brussels, but insisted there were signs that some of it was coming back.

He warned on BBC Radio 4's *The World at One*, however, that the Government had become too "Euro-obsessed". Europe had become such a dominant issue that Britain had taken its eye off the ball, he said.

Four-fifths of Britain's commercial and financial interests lay outside western Europe with vast income coming in from overseas assets and financial services, he said. "I have felt in recent years that foreign policy was coming a bit off the rails, and we seem to have lost confidence, or an ability, to count our own enormous strengths and deploy them."



Farewell to arms: David Howell, MP for Guildford, who is to quit at the next election

Mawhinney is left to face the fire

COLIN BROWN
Chief Political Correspondent

The Deputy Prime Minister, Michael Heseltine, yesterday left Brian Mawhinney, the Conservative Party chairman, to face the fire over the leaking of the contents of a draft speech by Lord Mackay of Clashfern, the Lord Chancellor.

Mr Heseltine told MPs Mr Mawhinney could answer the criticism, as Labour stepped up its demands for an inquiry into allegations of civil servants being used by the Tory party.

Sources close to Mr Heseltine said he was determined to go on to the offensive against Labour, to avoid becoming bogged down in the briefing last week by a member of Mr Mawhinney's staff which opened the Tory party chairman to attack.

"A mistake was made, there is no getting away from that, but he made it clear that he was not going to dwell on it. The aim is



On offensive: Michael Heseltine and Brian Mawhinney

to shake Labour up, and ruffle their feathers," said one ministerial source. "We are not going to give up now, just because it has got a bit rough."

Mr Heseltine chaired the Cabinet committee coordinating the Government's publicity and promotion at Downing

Street, but the Tories' attempt to counter the appeal of Tony Blair increased the tensions in the Government.

Responding to Labour taunts in the Commons about the use of civil servants, Mr Heseltine warned that Mr Blair would politicise the position of the

Prime Minister's press secretary by appointing a party political "spin doctor", Alastair Campbell to the post. If Labour won power.

Labour sources confirmed Mr Campbell, a former journalist and Labour supporter, was in line for the post, if Labour won the next general election. He will be seconded into the post as a civil servant. But the row threatened to embroil the Prime Minister's press secretary, Christopher Meyer.

Mr Meyer, a career diplomat, privately made it clear that he had no intention of breaking the code of keeping out of party political propaganda which he adopted on taking up the post. But the difficulty of his neutral position was underlined by Mr Heseltine's remarks. Most ministers, including the Prime Minister, have special advisers from the party network, on short contracts as civil servants.

Labour sources privately admitted that there would be a clear advantage in appointing a party supporter to the Number 10 role, because it would allow party presentation to be mixed with official briefings on Government business to the press.

Mr Meyer has drawn a clear line between presenting the Government's case in the best light, and refusing to engage in party political propaganda. He has had John Major's absolute support in maintaining his integrity as a civil servant.

But as the fight between the two parties gets more dirty, Mr Meyer's position could become more uncomfortable.

Senior Conservative Party sources said last night there were "no plans" to change the role of the Number 10 press office. "Labour is accusing us of using civil servants, which we deny. We are pointing out that Labour would politicise the Prime Minister's office. We have no intention of doing that."

Garda memo lands reporter in court

A Dublin journalist who uncovered a confidential Garda memo showing detectives knew in advance of plans to carry out Ireland's biggest ever robbery last January yesterday appeared before Dublin District Court charged with breaching Ireland's Official Secrets Act.

Liz Allen, a freelance crime reporter, wrote two reports in the *Irish Independent* last January which revealed a memo had been sent to Garda stations alerting officers to named suspects in an anticipated armed raid on a cash-in-transit target.

The memo was sent several days before the robbery at the Brinks-Allied depot in Clonsilla, north Dublin.

Judge David Riordan, presiding, heard Garda witnesses testify that nine copies of the intelligence report were sent on 22 January to stations in the Dublin north central division.

It and six photographs appeared in the newspaper on 27 January under the front page headline "£3m robbery fiasco: gardai were alerted."

After a Garda investigation only seven of the copies were later recovered from local stations. Gardaí visited the newspaper on two occasions in the immediate aftermath but failed to recover the document.

Mr Kevin Haugh, SC, prosecuting, said the memo was clearly covered under the terms of the Act because it contained "criminal intelligence of a secret and confidential sort".

The publishers, Independent Newspapers, who are also defendants, could not have had legal possession of the document because the company was not a public body. The hearing was adjourned until Friday, when a number of Irish TDs (MPs) will be called to give evidence.

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سكنا من الاجل

Schoolgirl's killer 'had dark alter ego'



A schoolgirl who died after being stabbed by a masked man who burst into her classroom during a maths lesson was a victim of the intruder's dark alter ego, Leeds Crown Court was told yesterday.

Nikki Conroy, aged 12, and two classmates were stabbed repeatedly after Stephen Wilkinson launched his attack at Hall Garth school, Middlesbrough, in March last year.

Wilkinson ordered teacher Graham Nellist out at gunpoint, barricaded the door and ordered the children to kneel

with their eyes closed. He then plunged a knife into Nikki and attacked Michelle Reeve, 13, and Emma Winter, 12.

Nikki, of Ridley Avenue, Middlesbrough, died almost instantly but Michelle and Emma were not seriously wounded.

David Robson, for the prosecution, said Wilkinson claimed "the person that was actually doing it was not S J Wilkinson but the dark side of his own nature, who he has always described as Wilson Jinks". Wilson Jinks is an anagram of S J Wilkinson.

Wilkinson's violent outburst

came to an end when the deputy head, Chris Bielby, and a teacher, Dave Eland, burst in and overpowered him, holding him down until police arrived.

Wilkinson, 30, of Caversham Road, Middlesbrough, denies murder but admits manslaughter on the grounds of diminished responsibility. He also admits the attempted murder of Michelle and Emma.

Mr Robson said Wilkinson told police he could recollect nothing about the attack. But he later had flashbacks and told psychiatrists he had been

"watching himself doing it".

The jury was told in a statement from Emma that just before the stabbing she heard Wilkinson say: "You are going to pay for what you have done to me." She closed her eyes and felt what she thought were punches. In fact, she was being stabbed.

The rest of the school was alerted when Mr Nellist, after being forced out of the class, shouted: "There's a nutter upstairs with a gun and he's got the kids." The teachers thought they would be putting the chil-

dren's lives at risk if they charged into the classroom, but they were forced to act when Wilkinson launched his attack.

Mr Eland and Mr Bielby burst through the door and grappled with Wilkinson before disarming him and pinning him down. The gun was later found to be a replica.

Mr Eland said that as he was being held, Wilkinson muttered: "Give me the knife and let me finish it." Mr Eland added: "I presumed this was his way of saying he wanted to commit suicide." The court was

told that, as well as two knives and the replica gun used in the attack, another knife and a small axe were found in a holdall Wilkinson had with him.

The jury was warned to consider the "deeply sad tale" in a "cool, calm and detached way". Referring to the stabbing of Lawrence, Mr Robson added: "In the light of the dreadful events over the weekend, there is a danger of emotion taking over. That you must not do."

An insight into the thoughts in Wilkinson's mind before the

attack came from a six-page document found in his holdall. In what he described as "Thoughts/Confessions" dated January 1994, two months before he stormed into the classroom, he referred chillingly to the effect his Wilson Jinks alter-ego was having on him.

He wrote: "Wilson Jinks wants to destroy me. If I let him gain ascendancy, he will also slaughter the lambs."

Earlier he stated: "This confession may read like that of a lunatic but I can assure you that I am quite sane. In truth I wish

only to convey to the world my absolute hatred of it. In doing so I shall steal the lives of society's weakest members; those most vulnerable and those most treasured."

The trial continues today.

Love, death, Pollyanna Peate and the secret passion of the Frodsham silver band



End of the affair: Brian Phillips (back row, far left) and Pollyanna Peate (front row, fourth from right) with the Frodsham Silver Band. Ms Peate (pictured right) with her husband, denies manslaughter

Photograph: Andrew Price

PETER VICTOR

An elderly village band trombonist was killed by his young lover and fellow band member during a final night of passion at the end of a ten-year affair, a court heard yesterday.

Brian Phillips, a 62-year-old grandfather, had a heart attack after mother-of-two Pollyanna Peate, 34, punched him at least four times when he tried to end a relationship that was "an

open secret" to their colleagues in the band. But, Chester Crown Court was told, Ms Peate had claimed Mr Phillips died while making love.

Police found Mr Phillips dead in his car in Hares Lane, on the marshes near Frodsham, Cheshire, early on 16 November 1994. Mr Mervyn Hughes, prosecuting, said the dead man had head injuries consistent with being hit "with moderate force" by a fist.

Mr Phillips had been at a rehearsal of the Frodsham Silver Band and had left with fellow musician Mrs Peate, then aged 33, at 9.30pm. "To the members of the band and possibly others, their relationship was an open secret," said Mr Hughes. "Members of the band were well aware, it seems, that despite a difference of something like 30 years in their ages, Mr Phillips and Mrs Peate were conducting an affair together."

"Nor was it a passing relationship. They had been having the affair for something in the region of 10 years. Although those in the band knew of it they had both successfully concealed the fact from their respective partners, who knew nothing of their relationship."

Mr Hughes said Ms Peate gave the police a detailed account of their movements that Tuesday evening, making no secret of the affair, but claiming

their relationship had been platonic for the last five years. She said they had sat for an hour talking together and Phillips had then driven her home.

Police arrested her on suspicion of manslaughter. When interviewed by detectives, she began to change her story, eventually admitting they had regularly been having sex near the spot where the car was found.

"That night they had both got

in the back of the car together. She said that during the act of sexual intercourse he had simply collapsed and died. She had tried to revive him but, having failed to do so, she dressed him and walked the mile or so back to Frodsham where she caught a taxi home."

Ms Peate had claimed they had discussed what to do if he ever collapsed in such circumstances and had agreed that she should leave the scene to spare

Mrs Phillips's embarrassment. But Mr Hughes said nothing in her explanation could account for the injuries Mr Phillips had received. There was evidence that he had been thinking of ending their relationship and during her interview Peate herself said Phillips had told him they were having sex "for the last time."

"It looks very much as if he had chosen this fateful night to tell her that their relationship

was over," said Mr Hughes. He said Mr Phillips, a blacksmith at Vauxhall's Ellesmere Port car plant, had suffered a serious heart attack in 1972. It was not the prosecution case that she intended to kill him but that in law, if you assault and injure someone particularly susceptible to serious injury, you cannot escape responsibility.

Ms Peate, of Runcorn, Cheshire, denies manslaughter. The case continues today.



Snack firm 'sacked accountant after learning she had cancer'

An accountant was sacked after she was diagnosed as having cancer while pregnant, an industrial tribunal was told today.

Carolee Coe, 30, had to undergo painful chemotherapy treatment, and a hysterectomy, after giving birth to her daughter Sarah last year. She told her employers at a snack-food firm that she would be able to return to work in May 1995. Instead, she was dismissed, the Manchester hearing was told.

Miss Coe, of Hyde, Greater Manchester, is claiming sex discrimination against the Leeds-based Tee-Gee Snacks, which employs 200 people at two

factories. She is claiming more than £180,000 compensation - five years' salary plus more than £80,000 in life assurance benefits which she has lost.

On 6 April 1994 her doctor told her she was pregnant. The baby was due in December, and Miss Coe handed a pregnancy certificate to Tee-Gee's personnel manager, Tony Bass. Later, she took two weeks' sick leave because of a threatened miscarriage. "When I returned in June 1994, I felt they were trying to... undermine my position," she told the tribunal, saying that she was no longer invited to planning meetings.

Miss Coe left the company in July as her pregnancy progressed. On 19 August she was told she had cancer. The company's finance director, Richard Fullwell, visited her, and she told him she was entitled to maternity leave until January 1995.

"He said he had heard a rumour I was willing to go for £20,000 [her annual salary]," Miss Coe said. She replied that this was not true, and that she wanted to continue [working] after the baby was born.

Sarah was born prematurely in October 1994. The following month Miss Coe left hospital after a hysterectomy in a "great

deal of pain". At the end of November she started "particularly rough" chemotherapy.

She had explained the situation to her employers who seemed happy that she should return to work in May 1995.

A short time later Mr Bass rang her. "He told me that due to the life insurance policy with the company's occupational pension scheme, the company had an interest in my estate and that I should make a will in case the treatment did not work," she said. "I was shocked... but said I would think about it."

When she returned home, she received a dismissal letter



Carolee Coe: £180,000 claim

from Tee-Gee, enclosing her P45. Miss Coe, who is now in remission from the disease, said the company had not said anything previously about her leaving. "The assurance was there that I would be returning to work," she said. "I was told my sick note was not a problem."

But she did notice that her desk had gone from her office.

Science fact follows fiction in 2001 space odysseys

CHARLES ARTHUR
Science Correspondent

Arthur C Clarke, author of 2001: A Space Odyssey, looked happy and relaxed yesterday in Sri Lanka as another of his predictions came true ahead of schedule. The first contact between the human race and the planet Jupiter - the tale he told in 2001 - took place last week, and the first data from the Galileo probe was received at the weekend.

But Mr Clarke, 77, told an audience in London - via another of his early predictions, the telecommunications satel-

lite - that he is increasingly concerned that manned spaceflight will become dangerous. The reason for his fears is not malicious aliens, but the proliferation of man-made satellites.

"I'm worried about the astronauts on the Shuttle having to pick their way through orbiting minefields," he said. In recent years, scientists have identified "space junk" - including a screwdriver dropped by an astronaut - as one of the biggest hazards in space. Even a tiny particle travels at thousands of miles per hour, gaining enough energy to punch a hole in a spacecraft's hull.

Besides Britain's most famous science-fiction writer, Mr Clarke also enjoys a reputation for being right. Patrick Moore, the astronomer, recalled a debate he once had with Mr Clarke, saying: "I said I thought man would walk on the moon in about 1990; he said it would be more like 1970." Neil Armstrong took his first "small step" there in 1969.

For the future, Mr Clarke foresees the collapse of the nation state. He added that his biggest fears for the world stem from the threat of nuclear war, and the twin effects of overpopulation and disease.



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news

Aftermath of a stabbing: Killing of headmaster prompts Home Office to introduce legislation as police step up the hunt

Knife offenders face tougher new laws

JASON BENNETTO,
JAMES CUSICK
and JUDITH JUDD

Prison sentences of up to three months and fines of £2,400 are to be introduced for knife carrying offences, according to a confidential Home Office letter obtained by the *Independent*.

The tougher laws, which are understood to include making the possession of a knife an arrestable offence, follow the murder of the headmaster Philip Lawrence.

It also emerged yesterday that detectives investigating the murder of Mr Lawrence, 48, outside St George's Roman Catholic secondary school, in Maida Vale, north-west London, are targeting a small group of children about the incident. The development came as

grieving pupils faced a day of prayer and counselling.

A letter from the Home Office revealed the Government wants to include stiffer penalties for knife carriers in their forthcoming White Paper on sentencing. At present the maximum sentence for unlawful possession of an offensive weapon is two years' imprisonment or an unlimited fine. But many cases are dealt with under a different Act which is easier to gain a conviction but only has a maximum £1,000 fine for carrying "an article with a blade or point in a public place".

A Home Office letter to David Blackey, secretary of the Association of Chief Police Officers' crime committee, and Chief Constable of West Mercia, reveals that the Home Secretary, Michael Howard, would

like the lesser sentence increased to a maximum of three months jail or a fine of £2,400.

It also discloses plans to make the possession of a knife an arrestable offence. Currently the police have to rely on laws which allow officers to only arrest people if they have "reasonable grounds" for suspected an offence is being committed.

An ACPO spokesman said the police would welcome tougher sentences against people who unlawfully carry knives.

The Prime Minister was yesterday said to be "appalled and shocked" by the killing of Mr Lawrence as it emerged that Gillian Shephard, the Secretary of State for Education, will hold a meeting of all six teacher unions later this week to discuss measures which could be introduced to protect teachers

and pupils from attack. Yesterday, she met representatives of the Secondary Heads Association who discussed the general topic of tighter controls on offensive.

John Sutton, the association's general secretary, said they had talked about knives and baseball bats and the prevalence of weapons in schools. "There have always been weapons in schools. What is new is the propensity to use them."

Police involved in the Lawrence murder investigation believe that a gang dispute was the most likely cause of his death. Yesterday, detectives were questioning the small group of pupils believed to have seen the attempts by the headmaster to help the 13-year-old pupil at St George's apparently being attacked.



Emotional view: Pupils at St George's school yesterday where lessons were abandoned in favour of a special mass

Pupils try to make sense of hardest lesson

There were no easy lessons at St George's School yesterday. On the first day back in the classroom since their headmaster was stabbed, pupils were guided by 30 counsellors in what may turn out to be one of the hardest lessons of their lives.

The counsellors - 20 from Westminster council's social services department, and 10 from the Catholic Children's Society - helped classes through their grief, sense of loss, and worry for the future.

Outside school later, pupils told how the counselling sessions, involving writing letters or cards to Philip Lawrence's family, had helped them.

One first-former said: "I wrote to Mr Lawrence's family. I told them I was sad. I told them it should never have happened. I told them not to feel terrible for too long. And I told them not to worry."

The writing therapy - a commonly used psychological technique in situations of severe grief - was carefully supervised.

Many pupils described how some of their friends had "privately cried" as they tried to express their innermost feelings.

The counselling sessions were only one part of the "special programme" the school governors and staff had prepared for yesterday. The focus was a special mass conducted by the Archbishop of Westminster, Cardinal Basil Hume.

After the mass, he said: "I told the children that it was very important to come today so we prayed together and prayed for Philip Lawrence and share our sorrow."

Praising Mr Lawrence's concern for his pupils and his bravery, Cardinal Hume said: "I reminded pupils of the [New Testament] text 'No greater love hath a person than to lay down his or her life for a friend'. That is what Philip Lawrence did. This was a headmaster who was a friend to all his pupils."

Although Cardinal Hume insisted that "the person who has done this terrible act should be caught and punished", he added: "We have to learn to for-

Counsellors help school to cope with grief, reports James Cusick

give. That is the hardest thing." During his sermon at the special mass, the Archbishop told pupils he had a message for the murderer: "My advice to him is to report to police at once. He needs to acknowledge his crime and pay his debt to society."

On their way into school for the start of the day there was a distinct air of unease as pupils passed the growing shrine of flowers that had built up over the weekend.

Asked by the assembled ranks of newspaper reporters and television crews how they felt, one word was often repeated: "Sad".

James, a first-former, said: "This is such a sad day. Mr Lawrence tried to push us and help us. He didn't deserve to die, not like that."

By the end of the day, after a hush break of what appeared to be normal play and noise from the school playground, pupils tried to express what the special day had meant to them.

Nicholas, ignoring the efforts of teachers and staff to move him away from television crews and reporters, insisted on having his say.

"It was a hard day. I can't remember everything that happened. I wrote some cards and said some prayers. All we know is that this should never have happened - not here."



Cardinal Hume: "We have to learn to forgive"

Glasgow knife crime success

JOHN ARLIDGE
Scotland Correspondent

Senior police officers examining ways to combat stabbings are turning their attention to Glasgow which has pioneered a highly successful knife crime prevention scheme.

In a city notorious for razor gangs and underworld violence, knife-related crime rose sharply three years ago. The number of knife murders and attempted murders more than doubled in 1992, with four people being stabbed on average each day. Detectives responded by introducing Operation Blade, a high-profile campaign supported by local authorities, the retail trade, schools, nightclub owners and the media.

Officers first announced a "knife amnesty", urging Glaswegians to "ban your deadly weapons or be put away yourselves". In the months that followed, 5,000 blades, including swords and machetes, were

left in "knife banks" at police stations across the city.

To back up the amnesty, officers mounted a stop-and-search campaign, searching almost 30,000 young people over four months. Nightclub owners joined the campaign by installing metal detectors and surveillance cameras. Hundreds of weapons were recovered.

Backed up by a change in the law, which required those found carrying knives to prove they were for legitimate use, hundreds of prosecutions followed.

Almost 100 retailers agreed to remove knives from display, and detectives lectured schoolchildren on knife crime. The effect was swift and dramatic. By the end of 1993, the number of offences involving the possession of offensive weapons slumped by almost 25 per cent. Knife-related incidents fell by 37 per cent. Although knife-crime started to creep up again last year, figures are well down on those of the early Nineties.

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مكتبة الامم المتحدة

Howard reveals 'white list' for asylum-seekers

STEPHEN GOODWIN
NICHOLAS TIMMINS
and HEATHER MILLS

Michael Howard, the Home Secretary, yesterday announced his so-called "white list" of countries, whose citizens he regards as facing no serious risk of persecution and unlikely to deserve asylum in Britain.

Accusations of "playing the race card" were hurled across the Commons as it emerged that thousands of would-be refugees from the seven countries - India, Pakistan, Ghana, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Poland and Romania - will find it still harder to make a case to remain in Britain under procedures to be introduced in the Government's Asylum and Immigration Bill.

But during a second reading debate on the Bill, Mr Howard said it was "not immoral" to insist that people from "safe" countries returned to pursue their claims there, or to protect the job opportunities of those entitled to live and work in Britain. He claimed that no further obstacles were being put in the way of genuine refugees. "But we must be a haven, not a honey pot," he said.

Meanwhile, church leaders joined in the controversy surrounding the clampdown on refugees by publicly airing their concerns - not only about the Bill but about plans to withdraw benefits from thousands of asylum-seekers next month. The two-pronged attack "appears to undermine the spirit" of the Geneva Convention on Refugees, they said in a letter to the *Times*. In particular, the benefit changes - due to come in on 8 January - meant many vulnerable people, including children, could find themselves homeless and penniless at the coldest time of year.

The Conservative-controlled Westminster City Council pleaded with the Government to defer the benefit proposals, alleging that the "claimed" trea-

sure savings will simply mean higher costs for local government.

Ministers maintain the move will save £200m a year. But Westminster believes the changes will cost it alone more than £10m a year "on relatively conservative assumptions", cutting the already stretched budget for children, the elderly and other social services. Other local authorities believe they too will face large bills and some Conservative MPs fear many of the savings will prove illusory.

David Shaw, the Tory MP for Dover, a key port of entry, told the *Independent* he was "very worried" that the costs would simply shift from social security to social services and housing. "We need to make absolutely sure that this is not just a sideways transfer of expenditure and is going to result in real savings," he said.

An estimated 13,000 asylum-seekers, plus their dependants, will be left penniless by the social security system. They include some 6,000 people who have entered the UK since the policy was announced on 12 October and then sought asylum, and some 7,000 who are currently appealing.

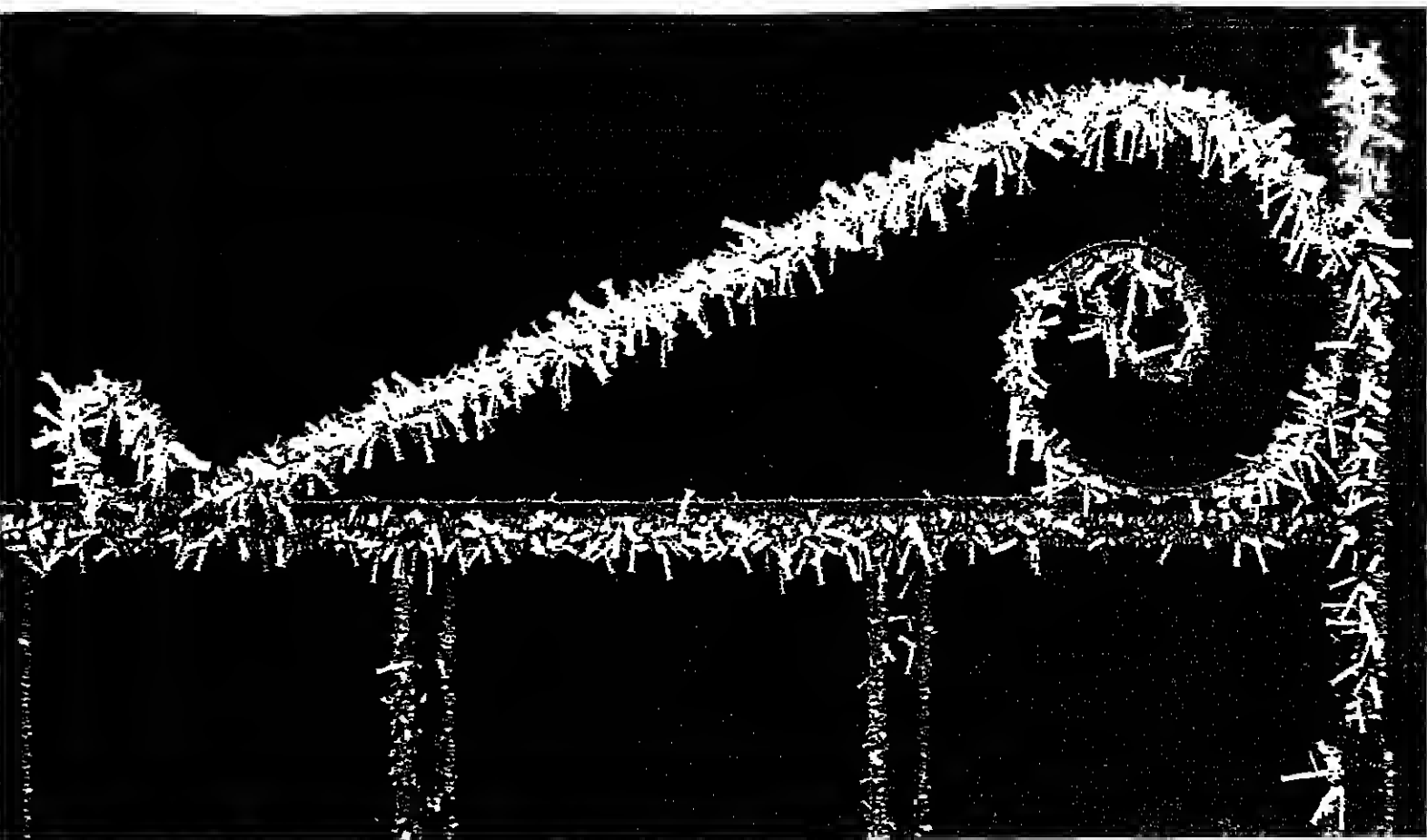
In the Commons, opposition parties again pressed for the Bill to be sent to special select committee, which could take evidence on the extent of the problem and why legislation introduced three years ago had failed to deal with it.

Jack Straw, the shadow Home Secretary, said Labour would oppose the Bill. The "white list" rules were "Kafkaesque and placed an 'almost impossible burden of proof' on asylum-seekers. In the nine months to the end of September, more than 6,000 applications for asylum were made by people from the three countries: India 2,380, Ghana 1,530, and Pakistan 2,130. Seventy were granted either refugee status or

granted extended leave to remain in Britain. Under the "fast-track" system proposed by Mr Howard their successors would have only a very restricted right of appeal.

Mr Howard said there were three criteria for placing countries on the list: no serious risk of persecution, that they generated significant numbers of asylum claims, and that a very high proportion proved to be unfounded.

He cited the case of a group of Pakistanis who claimed asylum because of their membership of the Pakistan People's Party and appealed against refusal - even though the PPP had since become the government of Pakistan.



The icing on the gate: Despite being a weekend in which many parts of the country were shrouded in mist and fog, the cold weather did have some compensations. At least the ice made a pretty picture, like this garden gate in Saffron Walden, Essex
Photograph: Brian Harris

London's ethnic balance shifting

NICHOLAS TIMMINS
Public Policy Editor

Almost 30 per cent of London's population is set to come from the ethnic minorities in 15 years' time, making London almost certainly the most ethnically diverse capital in the world.

Two London boroughs, Brent in the north-west and Newham in the east, are expected to have ethnic minority populations of more than 50 per cent, according to a new study undertaken by the London Research Centre. Three more, Tower Hamlets, Harrow and Ealing, are projected to be above 40 per cent. At present, the proportions for Brent and Newham are 45 and 44 per cent.

The growth results almost entirely from the age structure of the existing population rather than from immigration or higher birth rates, the centre - partially funded by the London boroughs - said yesterday.

'Breakthrough' drug is on NHS

LIZ HUNT
Health Editor

A drug which offers hope to thousands of people suffering from multiple sclerosis is now available on prescription in the United Kingdom.

Interferon-beta 1b has been described by doctors in the United States as the "biggest breakthrough" in MS for 20 years, although British doctors are more cautious.

However, they accept that in people with the relapsing or remitting form of MS, the drug has been shown to cut the frequency of relapses by up to a third, although it does not cure of halt the disease which is a degenerative disorder of the nervous system.

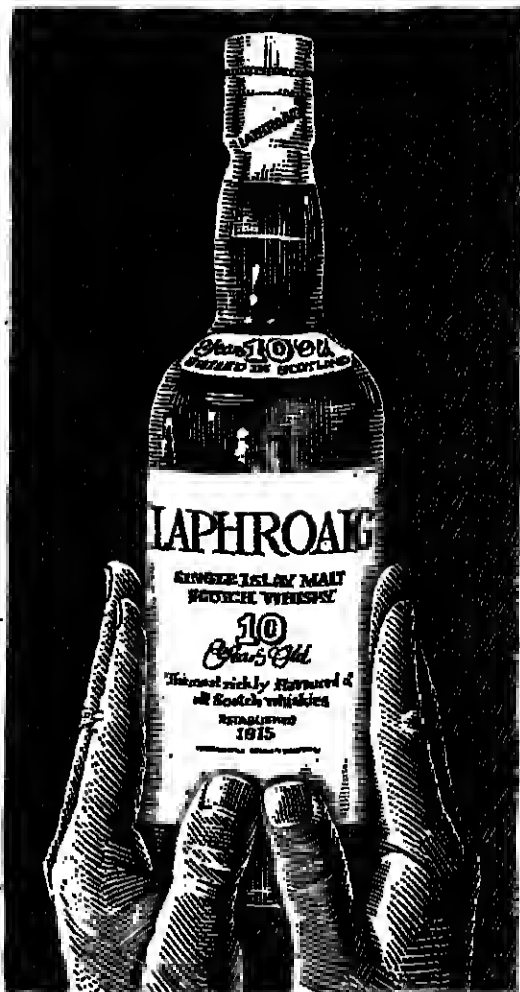
The drug, to be sold as Betaferon, was at the centre of a row over rationing in the National Health Service this year, after it was claimed that it would not be available to all patients who were suitable for treatment on the grounds of cost. A month's supply costs £806

per patient - £9,600 a year - and it may have to be administered over a number of years. There are around 85,000 people in the UK with MS, and up to half are potentially suitable for the drug.

The NHS Executive has issued guidelines on the prescribing of the drug and consultant neurologists in hospitals, rather than GPs, are likely to be prime prescribers at least in the short term.

A spokeswoman for Schering Health Care Ltd, which makes the drug, said yesterday: "Betaferon is expensive, but for some patients it might be eminently worth it. If people are having frequent relapses, every few months they may find they can't see or can't walk properly. This drug could make a big difference to them."

The drug has been available in the US for two years. A small number of patients in the UK have benefited from it already as it has been available for experimental use, although some health authorities have refused to pay for it.



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news

Abortion case surgeon tells of deep regret

A hospital consultant told a court yesterday that he was wrong to carry out an abortion on a childless woman who did not realise she was pregnant.

Reginald Dixon, an obstetrician and gynaecologist, aborted the 11-week-old foetus during a routine hysterectomy.

He denies unlawfully procuring a miscarriage during the operation in March 1993 on Barbara Whiten, now 38, at the King's Mill Hospital, Sutton-in-Ashfield, Nottinghamshire.

Mr Dixon, 38, stopped giving evidence last Thursday after suffering stress. In the witness box yesterday, he said he decided to continue with the operation and so abort the foetus. He said: "I felt I had made a particularly hard and difficult decision and which has turned out to be wrong, which I very much regret. It is an extraordinary situation. I continued with the operation with considerable trepidation. I was anxious."

At the time, I believed I was doing the right thing. The easiest thing for me to do would have been to have just taken a look, closed the abdomen and walked away. I was trying to do the best for my patient, but that would have been doing the best for myself."

Mr Dixon said he continued with the surgery because he feared his patient would suffer serious mental problems if the child was allowed to be born. He also feared the foetus might not be healthy, because of the drugs he thought Mrs Whiten was taking to ease her womb condition, which was the reason for the original operation.

He said: "I felt, having reviewed the total situation of her ongoing problems and previous history of mental instability, that the best solution for her future mental health was that I continue the operation." He said that her age, which was then 35, was also influential.

"Mrs Whiten told her doctor that she never wanted a pregnancy at any time. I know that many professional women reach a stage in their lives when what they want to do is get on with their careers and not start a family, and that can be very important. Sometimes it is purely financial. In the great majority of patients that I have encountered in circumstances similar to Mrs Whiten's, the patients ask for the operation to be carried out."

Mrs Whiten has told Nottingham Crown Court she desperately wanted the child. But

Mr Dixon said yesterday: "I think that the new life that she had been hoping for would have been shattered—that is a symptom-free life and the chance to concentrate on her work." He said he tried to contact her husband before completing the operation and discussed it with the anaesthetist, who agreed that surgery should continue.

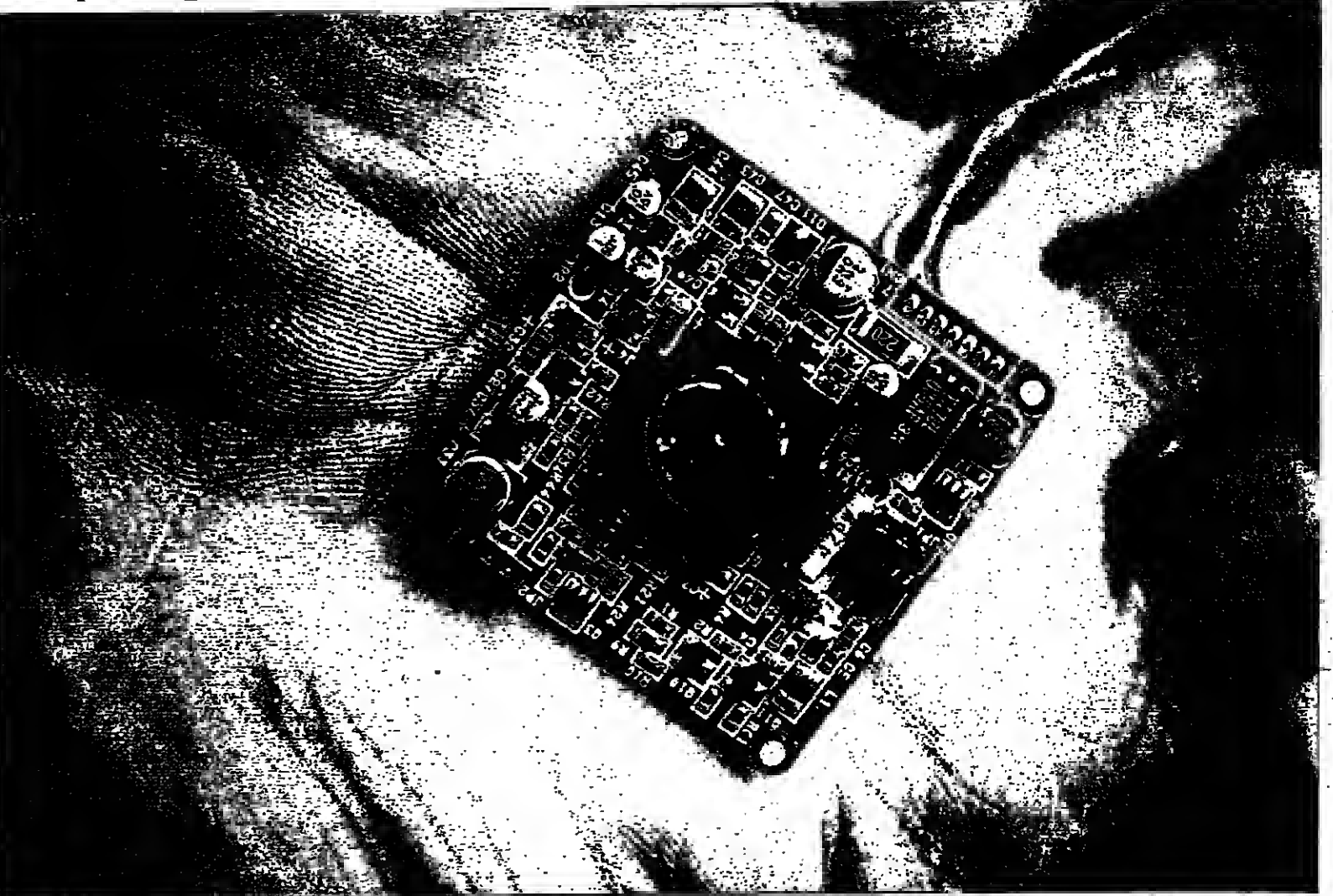
Mr Dixon told his patient about the operation the following day, when she had recovered from the general anaesthetic. Mrs Whiten said in evidence that he had mentioned the pregnancy only in passing and had left her distressed and confused.

But Mr Dixon denied that and said he had sat on her bed and held her hand as he told her what happened. "I said, 'I am sincerely sorry. I have something to tell you about the operation. I am very much afraid you may have been pregnant.'"

"She gave me a polite smile and her exact words were 'Don't worry, you did the right thing,' said Mr Dixon. He said she was not distressed, and she was not angry when a report from the pathologist later confirmed she had been pregnant."

The case continues today.

Shoplifting crackdown: Stores use device to keep hidden eye on customers



Surveillance operation: One of the miniature cameras that Dillons used in its stores to keep a check on customers Photograph: Edward Webb

Secret strip brings thieves to book

MARIANNE MACDONALD
Media Correspondent

Peter Rabbit has been tagged by Dillons bookstores in the first UK trials of a secret device to identify book thieves.

It could cut thefts of Beatrix Potter—a shoplifter's favourite—down to nothing, if initial findings are accurate.

The system involves inserting a thin three-inch magnetic strip under the spine during the printing process. When the book is bought it is demagnetised at the till so that it does not set off an alarm when removed from the store.

The system differs from the present flawed and time-consuming process of manually inserting the magnetic strips between the pages—which can be shaken out by shoplifters.

In a two-week experiment last

month, the spines of 10 Beatrix Potter titles, which have always sold well, were fitted with the magnetic tags in their spines and filmed on open display in stores around Britain.

In contrast to previous experience, few of the books were removed—legally or otherwise. Footage from concealed cameras revealed customers riffling randomly through the books, apparently in search of the removable tags. When they could not find them, they left the books alone.

"Some stores don't have equipment to log the movement of books and we've always wondered if they were going out of the door in a customer's bag or a Dillons bag," said Ken Harwood, security director of Dillons, from his anonymous London base. "Now we know."

The festive season is the jolliest for shoplifters, but all year round chains such as Dillons and Waterstone's suffer up to 3 per cent shrinkage. The culprits defy stereotyping.

"There's the man who steals A to Zs from one of our London stores and sells them outside cut-price," says Ray Winter, security operations manager for Dillons. "And there's the guy who advertised on the Internet for students' reading lists. He'd steal the books for them and charge half the cover price."

Then there was the "awayday



Eagle eye: A customer is observed innocently browsing

businessman" who stole books from a different city every day and sold them to second-hand bookshops, and the executive who commuted to London from Leicester to steal books at precisely 11.30 every morning until his wife found out—she was unaware that he had lost his job.

All were captured on film by cameras with lenses the size of a pinhead hidden behind the bookshelves, in the lifts, inside smoke alarms and behind posters inside the busiest Dillons stores.

The one in the lift at the

Gower Street store in central London was particularly effective—catching out a young female executive and a pony-tailed middle-aged man with a hidden compartment in his briefcase.

The solution could be the new system of tagging. The problem is persuading the publishers to install the expensive new machinery in their printing plants.

They have little to gain—the shops carry the cost of the thefts, and are forced to order extra copies to replace the books that vanish.

Most stolen books

1. The Beatrix Potter tales
2. Winnie-the-Pooh books
3. Golden Sounds—children's books, with buttons which make noises
4. Illustrated art books
5. Terry Pratchett's Magisteria
6. New Age books (especially in Exeter and Southampton)
7. Pevsner's architectural guides
8. World Atlases
9. Local guides
10. The London A to Z Streetfinder

UK bestsellers

1. Stephen Hawking: A Brief History of Time
2. Edith Holden: The Country Diary of an Edwardian Lady
3. Peter Mayle: A Year in Provence
3. Rosemary Conley: The Complete Hip and Thigh Diet
5. Della Smith: Della Smith's Complete Illustrated Cookery Course
6. David Attenborough: Life on Earth
7. Della Smith: Della Smith's Complete Cookery Course
8. Sue Townsend: The Secret Diary of Adrian Mole, Aged 13 3/4
9. Jacob Bronowski: The Ascent of Man
9. Christopher Brickell: RHS Gardeners' Encyclopedia of Plants and Flowers

Sweet adverts attacked

GLENDIA COOPER

Children see three to four times more advertising for fatty and sugary foods than adults and are being "saturated" with unhealthy food, a report by the National Food Alliance says.

The paper, *Easy to Swallow, Hard to Stomach*, found that 7 out of 10 adverts during Children's ITV are for food compared with only 2 out of 10 during adult programming.

Although government guidelines for a healthy, balanced diet recommend that fatty and sugary foods should account for no

more than 7 per cent of our diet, the survey found advertising for these food made up 44 to 76 per cent of all food advertising.

During programming for children breakfast cereals (mostly sweetened) and sweets were the most intensively advertised food products. Much of the rest was for soft drinks, fast foods, ice cream and lollies. Out of 549 food adverts monitored only two were for fruit and vegetables, although it is recommended these should make up 33 per cent of a healthy diet.

The NFA wants the Government to support pilot projects

to investigate how to promote healthier foods. It should also tell the Independent Television Commission not to transmit adverts for fatty and sugary foods during children's viewing.

The Food Advertising Unit claimed advertising is far less influential than family and peers. Jeffrey Goldstein, Professor of Psychology at the University of Utrecht, said restrictions would have undesirable economic and psycho-social effects. "Children would be isolated as a social group... and regarded as incapable of making their own decisions," he said.

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If you would like more information about the BDA and a free guide to making a will for how to amend an existing will just fill in the coupon.

Occasionally, our name and initials may have been confused with other similar-sounding organisations. So if you would like to make the British Diabetic Association a beneficiary of your will, please make sure that your will and instructions are made out to the British Diabetic Association, 10 Queen Anne Street, London W1M 0BD.

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- Constant campaigning on behalf of people with diabetes—for example, arguing for the right of people with diabetes to choose the kind of insulin that best suits them
- Informative magazine 'Balance' produced for members six times a year
- Highly successful awareness campaign of the symptoms of diabetes has ensured that many people are promptly diagnosed
- 150,000 members' interests safeguarded, and 450-strong local branch network throughout UK supported

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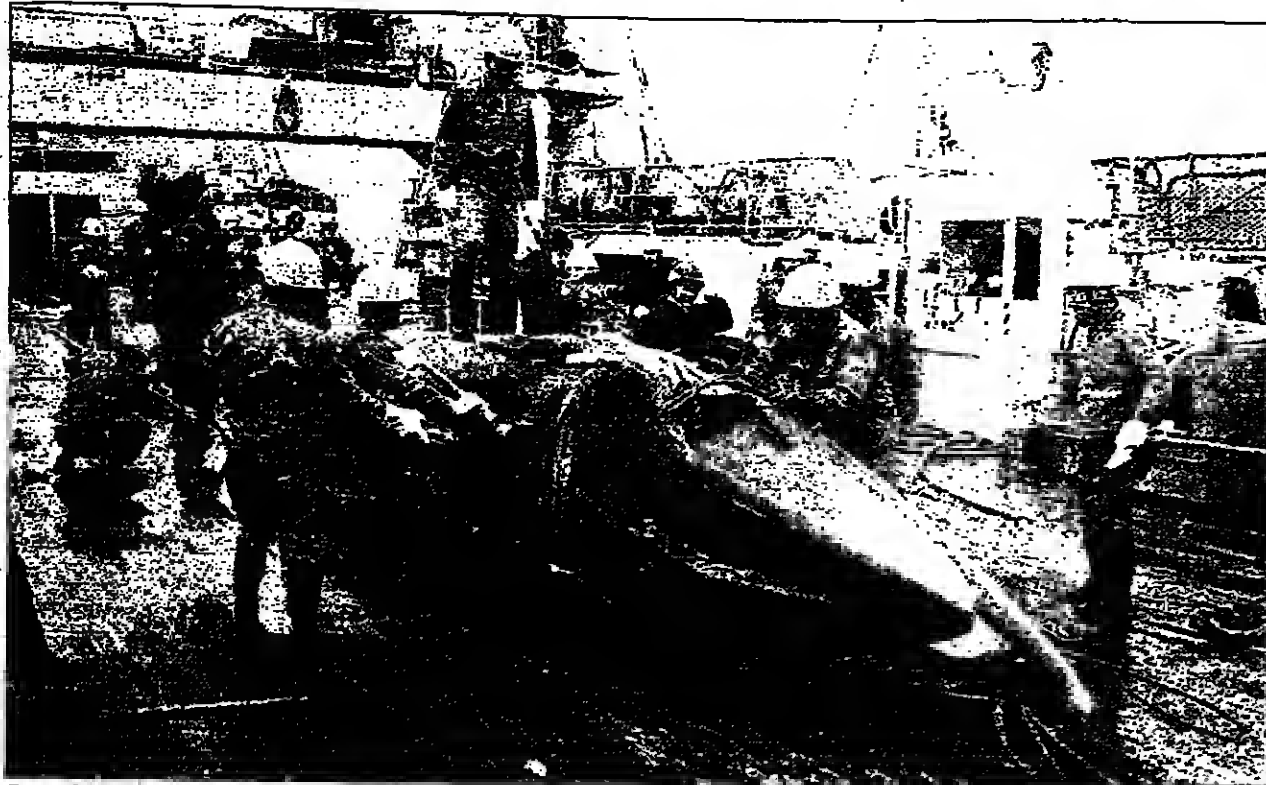
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'Killing waters' journalist sued for £260,000



Sea of blood: A minke whale is processed on a Japanese whaler for 'scientific data' Photograph: Mark Votier/Sygnia

STEVE BOGGAN
Chief Reporter

A British journalist who exposed the electrocution of Antarctic minke whales is likely to lose a £260,000 court case today against the Japanese institute that ordered the deaths for "research".

Mark Votier is being sued by the Japanese Institute of Cetacean Research for releasing footage of the killings to the media in 23 countries.

Mr Votier, 37, who will not contest the action in Tokyo's district court, was privately commissioned to film a whaling expedition in the Antarctic in February 1993. But he was so sickened by what he saw that he decided to release the footage. The institute is suing him for £60,000 and the court is likely to impose £200,000 costs.

"Altogether, I watched 30 harpoonings," Mr Votier said yesterday. "In about 50 per cent of cases the whales were immobilised instantly and shackled to the side of the catcher ship for transport to the waiting factory ship.



Mark Votier: Released film of slaughter to media

estimate, is eight minutes. However, I did witness one botched electrocution which took 25 minutes. If I had not released the pictures I could not have lived with the decision."

Mr Votier, who lived in Japan for seven years, said he will ignore the court ruling but may have to take further legal advice if the institute, which is part-funded by the Japanese government, initiates proceedings in Britain. He has been supported by the International Fund for Animal Welfare.

Japan and Norway continue to be the only nations to ignore consistently appeals by the International Whaling Commission not to engage in "scientific research" whaling following the world ban on commercial whaling in 1987.

Last year, Japanese fleets killed more than 300 minke whales and the figure for this year is likely to climb to 440.

Vassili Papastavrou, an IFAW marine biologist, said he believed the institute was wrong to sue Mr Votier. "The institute is trying to stifle a basic human right - free speech," he said. "It

is another attempt by the Japanese to hide the barbarity of their whaling."

The Whale and Dolphin Conservation Society said Mr Votier's actions had advanced the whales' cause and his footage had been used by the British government in talks aimed at reinforcing the whaling moratorium. "The Japanese are unrepentant about the killings but they are having to face up to slowly growing public opinion at home, so it is a very sensitive issue for them," their spokesman Jonathan Owen said. "This kind of electrocution is simply barbaric. We would argue that the whole exercise is completely unscientific and is just a pretext for them to carry on whaling."

A spokesman for the Agriculture and Fisheries Division of the Japanese Embassy denied that the whaling was unscientific. "We need to gather scientific data on the age and sex and population of the minke whales in the Antarctic," he said, claiming that around 400 whales had to be slaughtered to satisfy statistical best practice.

Police brought to book for drug arrest

HEATHER MILLS
Home Affairs Correspondent

A "highly respected" community worker was yesterday awarded £76,000 damages from the Metropolitan Police to settle his damages claim for false imprisonment, assault and malicious prosecution.

Rennie Kingsley, 48, claimed he was assaulted by officers who smashed their way into his house, planted drugs on him and then maliciously pursued him through the courts on false charges.

Latest figures show that Scotland Yard has paid out nearly £1.5m to settle 48 substantial court claims for assault or false imprisonment over the past two years - but has taken disciplinary action against only four officers as a result.

Mr Kingsley served four months in prison before his conviction for possessing LSD and cocaine was overturned by the Court of Appeal. The prosecution did not contest Mr Kingsley's submission that the truthfulness of the police officers' evidence at trial could no longer be relied upon.

Yesterday the High Court was told that a formal complaint on behalf of Mr Kingsley was investigated as part of the "Operation Jackpot" inquiry, conducted into allegations of corruption against a number of officers at Stoke Newington

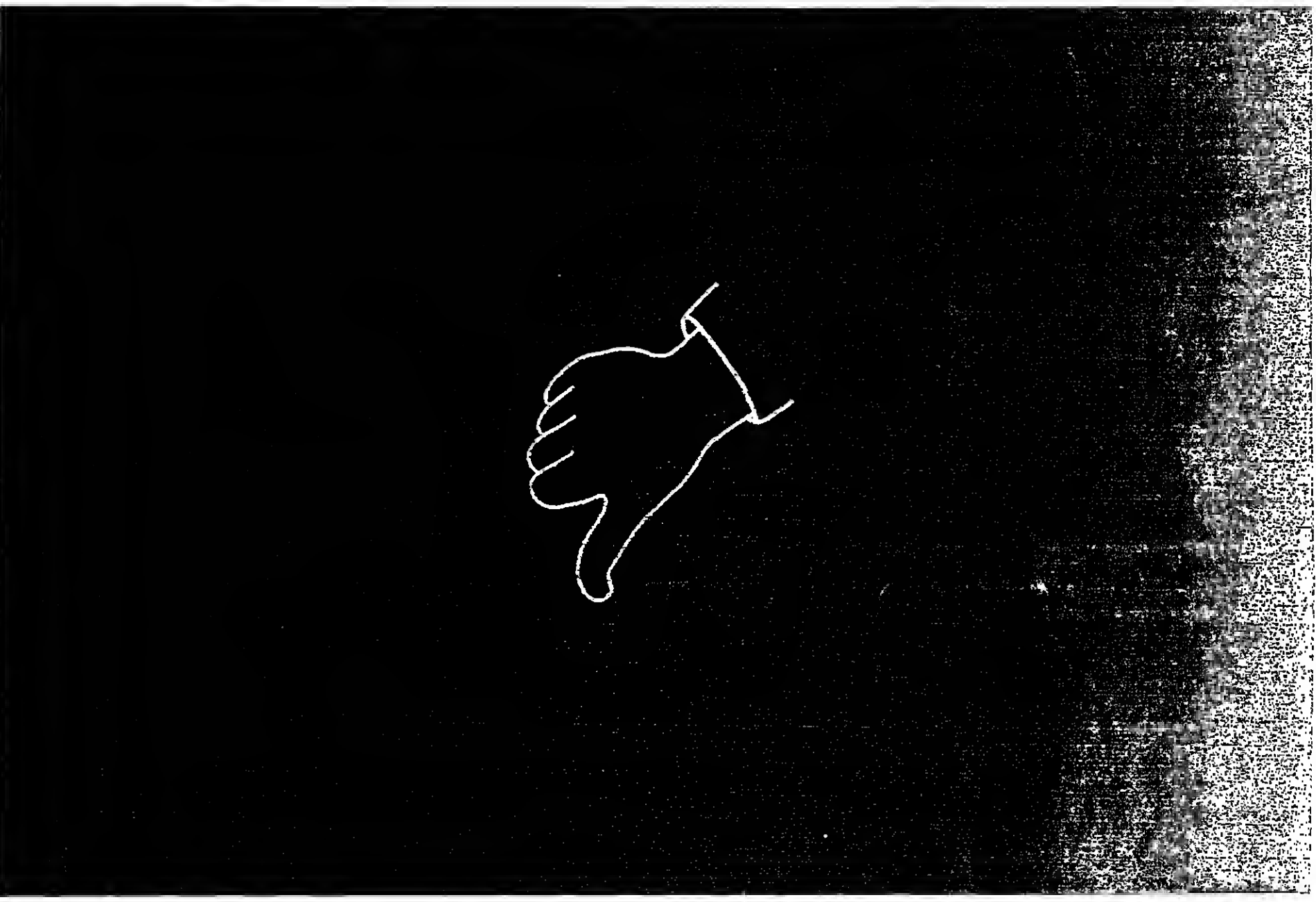
police station, north London. But the Crown Prosecution Service decided that no charges would be brought against officers involved in Mr Kingsley's case and neither were there any disciplinary charges. Russell Miller, Mr Kingsley's solicitor, told the court the only course left open to him in order to pursue his grievances was to sue.

The four-year Jackpot inquiry into up to 44 police officers has resulted in only one conviction. Although the individual officers involved in Mr Kingsley's case continued to deny his allegations, the Metropolitan Police did not contest his claims.

Mr Kingsley considered that the sum recognised the "injury, pain, shock, distress, anxiety, humiliation, degradation and loss of liberty," he claims to have suffered. The police have also agreed to pay his costs, estimated at a further £25,000.

Mr Miller said Mr Kingsley was a man who, for the past 14 years, had worked with local voluntary projects for the homeless. "He has earned respect and standing in the community of which he is a valued member."

He was at an address in east London in August 1990, when police broke down the front door with a sledgehammer. At Stoke Newington police station, on the basis of " concocted and fabricated allegations" he was charged with the drugs offences.



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news

Graduates find job prospects bright again

JUDITH JUDD
Education Editor

Graduates are challenging the workaholic lifestyle of their predecessors as their job prospects improve rapidly, according to a survey published yesterday.

Graduate unemployment fell by two percentage points to 9.7 per cent in 1994, despite a 13 per cent increase in graduate numbers.

The result, say employers, is that the nervous and earnest workaholics of a few years ago are disappearing.

They have been superseded by more confident interviewees who are telling interviewers that they want jobs compatible with family life.

A survey by the Association of Graduate Careers Advisory Services, which examines what happened to graduates six months after they left college, showed that more were securing permanent employment and fewer are having to take temporary jobs.

Nigel Llewellyn, national recruitment partner for the accountants Touche Ross, which sponsored the survey, said: "For the last few years, students felt they could not raise issues of

lifestyle or workstyle. Accountability applicants felt they had to seem boring and shy. We had to wrinkle signs of personality out of them. Now lifestyle issues are being talked about quite openly."

According to the survey, graduates in most subjects were finding it easier to get jobs with computing and information technology notching up record employment rates of around 60 per cent.

Employment in both mechanical and civil engineering also increased – and for non-vocational subjects such as English and history.

The improvement took place despite a 22,000 increase in the numbers graduating. In business studies, numbers were up by more than 60 per cent, and in English by 25 per cent. Since 1992, graduate numbers have risen overall by 42.5 per cent.

The rise in business studies graduates was caused by the Eighties boom and is unlikely to be repeated.

Jenny Jones, editor of the report, said: "The first tentative signs of a recovery in the job market for graduates, which we began to identify in the 1993 figures, have become more confident indicators of a general

improvement in graduates' prospects."

However, competition for the top jobs is as fierce as ever and students need to spend time preparing their applications. Mr Llewellyn said students who had done no research into their chosen firm and career stood little chance.

A further survey carried out in 40 old and 28 new universities this autumn by the association confirms more vacancies for graduates, but it found that the pattern was uneven throughout the country. Getting a job remains hard work.

The survey found that employers were increasingly looking for students on target for upper second class degrees and with good A-levels, or at least a lower second class degree in a vocational course and an impressive personality. For others, the prospect is bleak.

Though the annual "milk round", with employers visiting campuses to interview candidates, is in decline, the number of employers making presentations at universities is growing.

What Do Graduates Do? Available from Biblios Publishers' Distribution, Star Road, Partridge Green, West Sussex, RH13 8LD. Price £5.95



Key of life: A collection of home computers and keyboards at Maidstone Museum and Art Gallery, part of 'Collectomania - The People's Show', until 17 March. Other collections on display include toast racks, key-rings, tiles and Arsenal Football Club memorabilia. Photograph: Edward Webb

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Union keeps the faith for TV adverts launch

BARRIE CLEMENT
Labour Editor

Britain's first television advertising campaign on behalf of a union will contain a distinctly "old Labour" message, it was revealed yesterday.

The 1.3-million-strong public service union Unison, which is expected to become the Labour Party's biggest affiliate next year, has chosen the theme of collective strength in an advertisement due to be transmitted for the first time on Friday.

Instead of adopting the "modernist" approach of marketing its legal and contractual advice services, Unison has gone for a humorous yet unmistakable message that collectivism is all-important.

The cartoon depicts a large and particularly stupid bear, representing management, who is politely asked to move out of the way by a diligent worker ant. A second ant joins his colleague to ask the bear to move,

but to no avail. Keen to complete their task, the two ants leave to return with an army of colleagues who bellow "get out of the way" at the ursine obstacle, who leaps for cover.

Alan Jinkinson, general secretary of Unison, said yesterday he was "particularly pleased" with the traditional flavour of the ad because people were in need of protection at work.

"The message is simple – it's the basis of trade unionism – strength in numbers and the collective good."

"All the membership surveys we have conducted indicate that an overwhelming number of people, both men and women, join unions for traditional reasons. We have tried to put it over in a humorous and gentle way."

The £1.2m recruitment campaign, which will begin on Friday during an episode of *Brookside* on Channel 4, could mark the start of an entirely new approach to union self-

promotion. The advertisements will be broadcast at peak times on Channel 4 in two tranches with the first part continuing through Christmas into January. A second phase is planned for April, possibly supplemented by cinema advertising.

Mr Jinkinson said the union was particularly keen to target young people – only 9 per cent of Unison members were under 24 – and the timing of the advertisements had been chosen with that in mind. They are scheduled to be seen in commercial breaks during films, football and the American series *Frasier*.

Unison suffers from a particularly high turnover of around 200,000 people a year as members leave through job loss, career change and retirement.

The union needed to recruit both new workers and existing employees, and was also keen to raise public awareness of the union, Mr Jinkinson said.

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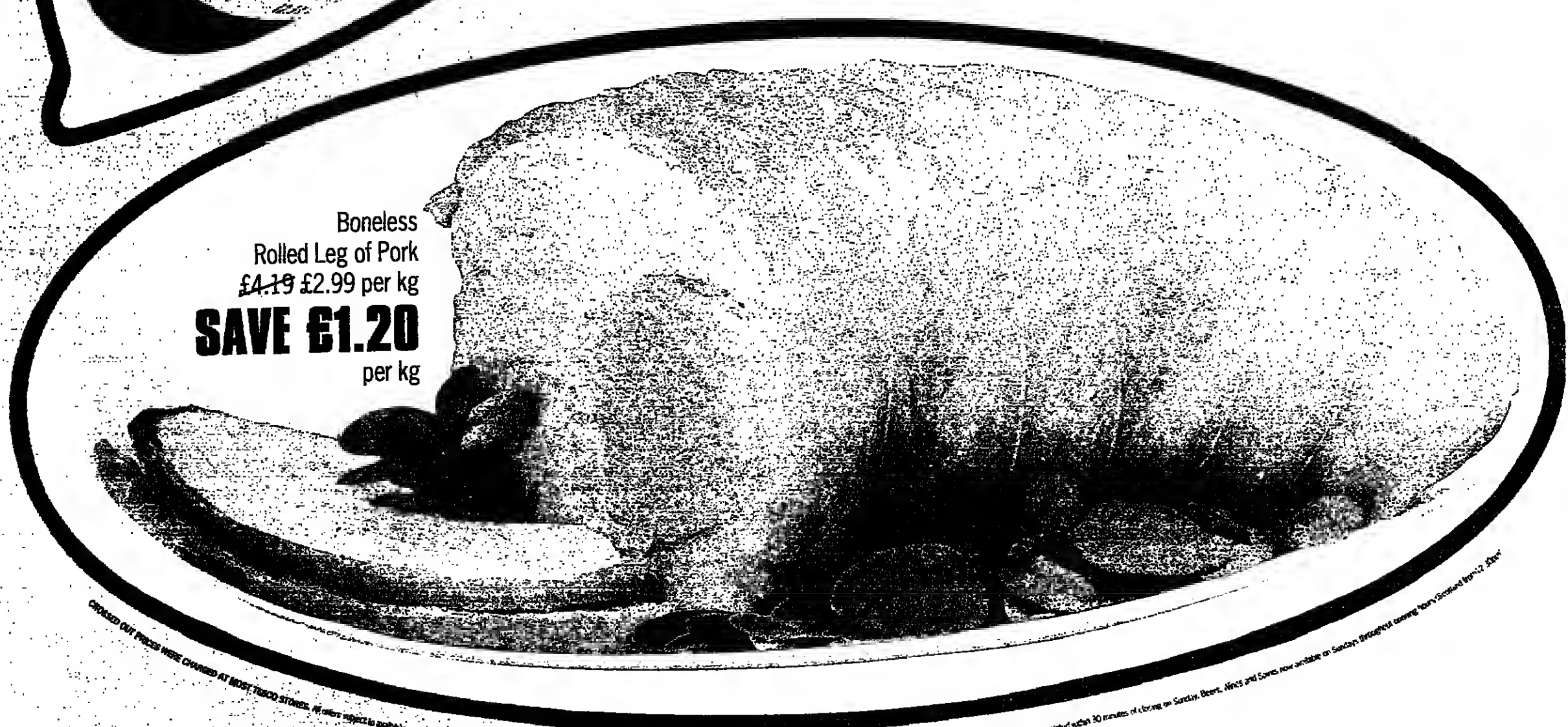
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politics

Party policy in the dock: Programme to correct imbalance of the sexes in Parliament is illegal, an industrial tribunal is told

Women-only shortlists put Labour 'above law'

JOHN RENTOU
Political Correspondent

The Labour Party was accused yesterday of putting itself above the law, by two men who claim they were illegally discriminated against when they were prevented from becoming parliamentary candidates.

"The Labour Party is arguing that a political party is above the law, not just of this country but of European law as well. That is an affront," Peter Jepson told an industrial tribunal in Leeds.

Mr Jepson argued that Labour's policy of women-only shortlists in half its winnable seats is in breach of the 1975 Sex Discrimination Act and the 1976 European Equal Treatment Directive.

Mr Jepson, who was barred from standing in two London seats, is representing himself and Roger Dyas-Elliott, who was turned away from the Keighley seat, in Yorkshire.

James Goudie QC, for the Labour Party, described Mr Jepson's charge as a "monstrous distortion" and argued

that the members of the tribunal would be "spending a rather uncomfortable time in the Tower of London" if they interfered with the election of MPs.

Mr Goudie said that being an MP was not employment, hence the Act did not apply and the tribunal had no jurisdiction in the case. "Neither selection as a Parliamentary candidate nor election as an MP is an 'employment' in a professional trade," he said.

If the Act covered the selection of candidates by political parties, "it will lead to absurd results which Parliament cannot possibly have intended," he added.

He quoted Dr Shirley Summerskill, a Labour Minister at the time the Sex Discrimination Bill was discussed in the Commons, who told a Conservative MP that political parties fell outside the relevant provision.

In any case, it was the electorate, not the parties, who decided who would be an MP, Mr Goudie said.

Even if the tribunal did not accept the Labour Party's argument in relation to the Act,



Challenge: Peter Jepson (left) and Roger Dyas-Elliott arrive for the start of the tribunal hearing in Leeds yesterday. Photograph: Justin Slee

Mr Goudie went on, it was clear that "positive action" was permitted under EU law and the European Convention on Human Rights.

Mr Jepson disputed that, saying there was a difference between positive action, which meant encouraging and assist-

ing women to put themselves forward, and positive discrimination, which meant banning men.

The Labour Party brought in the policy of women's quotas at its 1993 conference in Brighton - in the same vote with which John Smith secured "one mem-

ber, one vote" democracy in the selection of candidates. So far, 37 women have been chosen from women-only lists, and only a handful of seats remain.

Mr Goudie described the case as "utterly misconceived and an abuse of the process of an industrial tribunal".

Mr Jepson argues that if his case succeeds, all parties - not just Labour - would be required to comply with the provisions of the Sex Discrimination Act in choosing Parliamentary candidates.

This would prevent Conservative selection committees ask-

ing women if they intend to have children and men if their wives would host tea parties.

Mr Jepson has now applied for the nomination in Hayes and Harlington, where it was recently decided not to impose an all-women shortlist.

The hearing continues.

Main players in the case

Peter Jepson: A 45-year-old PhD student at University College, London, and a part-time lecturer in civil liberties law, Mr Jepson was once a Liberal Councillor in Oxford. He joined the Labour Party 16 years ago and this year he applied to be a candidate for two London seats. The Equal Opportunities Commission is giving him limited support in the form of £750 for a barrister's legal opinion.

Roger Dyas-Elliott: A 49-year-old part-time mature student at Sheffield Hallam University, with a beard and ponytail, Mr Dyas-Elliott failed to be adopted as the Labour candidate for Scarborough, Grantham and Doncaster North before the last election. He is secretary of Bassetlaw District Labour Party, a parish councillor and school governor.

James Goudie QC: A senior Queen's Counsel in the chambers of Lord Irvine, Labour's Legal Affairs spokesman in the House of Lords, Mr Goudie is chairman of the Society of Labour Lawyers. He stood for parliament - against Rhodes Boyson in Brent North - in 1974, and was Labour Leader of Brent Council, 1977-78.

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Inquiry into nuclear dump counts cost of Irish delay

Stephen Goodwin reports on the mounting bills from hearing into Nirex's plans to bury waste in Cumbria

A change of tactics by the Irish government has put further pressure on the long-running inquiry into plans for a nuclear waste dump beneath west Cumbria and almost certainly added to the multi-million pound bill for the taxpayer.

The inquiry, now in its 13th week, was expected to end by Christmas but could well run into February. If each day spent hearing evidence in the civic hall at Cleator Moor is taken as a day of delay in disposing of the nuclear industry's waste, then the inquiry is costing £150,000 a day, virtually all of it extracted from the public purse.

Radioactive waste sufficient to cover a football pitch 40ft deep is at present stored above ground, two-thirds of it at British Nuclear Fuel's Sellafield reprocessing plant, two miles from the dump site.

The inquiry was ordered after Cumbria County Council refused an application by UK Nirex to build an underground laboratory near Gosforth on the edge of the Lake District national park. So far the delay has set back Nirex's timetable by 18 months at a cost of some £50m in interest on loans. The earliest waste from Sellafield could go into the repository is 2012.

Meeting the latest target date assumes Nirex is successful in its inquiry appeal to build the laboratory (Rock Characterisation Facility), the results show the rock is safe, and it then gets permission for the full repository - an issue which will inevitably spark another big inquiry. Uncertainty over waste disposal has put a damper on the Government's hopes of



Waste not: Sellafield reprocessing plant, Cumbria, present site of the Nirex waste

raising £3bn by privatising most of the nuclear power industry.

Nirex's costs account for by far the largest portion. It is reckoned to have spent up to £10m so far on the inquiry - from a top legal team to a dozen support staff. Some £100,000 has been spent refurbishing an old mill as a modern office with 40 people working there on the Nirex case. When the inquiries are over the building will revert to the community.

Cumbria County Council estimates the cost to its charge payers at about £500,000. The

council has one QC but also has to pick up the inquiry's day-to-day running costs.

Copeland Borough Council has netted some £20,000 from its lease of the hall and offices to third parties such as Greenpeace and Friends of the Earth. Ironically, Copeland objects to Nirex's plans.

All the parties suspect they will be in the civic hall longer as a result of a change of plan by the Irish government, which was due to give evidence last week. It appears the Irish have decided to upgrade their case

and take on a Queen's Counsel. They are now expected to give evidence in the New Year.

Dublin has consistently opposed the expansion of nuclear facilities at Sellafield, regarding it as "part of an inexorable and increasing threat to public health, the environment and vital interests such as fishing, agriculture and tourism".

By February the inquiry will have sat for 64 days - well off the 100 days for the Thorp reprocessing plant at Sellafield and 340 days on the Sizewell B nuclear power station.

Major plans 'informal' visit to Dublin

COLIN BROWN

John Major is expected to visit Dublin before Christmas for an informal meeting with John Bruton, the Irish Prime Minister, to strengthen relations over the Anglo-Irish peace initiative.

The two prime ministers remained at odds during their emergency summit in London over Britain's demand that the

IRA should start disarming before being admitted to all-party talks.

Downing Street declined to confirm reports in Dublin that Mr Bruton had pencilled in 21 December for a further meeting with Mr Major. The Prime Minister's office said they were likely to discuss Northern Ireland in the margins of the Madrid summit later this week.

However, Dublin sources confirmed that it was likely an informal pre-Christmas meeting would take place. As the two prime ministers are unlikely to bridge their gap over the IRA, the meeting will be seen as a public relations exercise to demonstrate their determination to remain united over the main thrust of the peace process, in spite of differences.

The meeting is certain to have a seasonal flavour, with both prime ministers seeking to consolidate the peace at Christmas. Mr Major is also likely to use the visit for some shopping in Dublin, but both know that the hard bargaining lies ahead in the New Year, when the international decommissioning body chaired by Senator George Mitchell reports back.

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Pressure builds for French pilots' release

MICHAEL SHERIDAN
Diplomatic Editor

France suspended its threatened but unspecified reprisals against Bosnian Serbs yesterday as intensive talks took place to achieve the release of two French pilots shot down over Bosnia in August.

"Intensive contacts are under way on the one hand with our allies, on the other hand with Belgrade," an aide to President Jacques Chirac said. "Under these conditions, the decisions taken by France will not be announced today."

The official spoke after President Chirac held his second meeting of the day with his defence and foreign ministers on the fate of Captain Frédéric Chiffot and Lieutenant José Souvignat, whose Mirage 2000 was shot down during Nato air raids over the Bosnian Serb stronghold of Pale on 30 August.

France had brought enormous international pressure to bear on behalf of the two men. Nato had also launched at least three covert military missions to try to snatch the men back.

The French government set a deadline of Sunday for the two to be returned or for precise information to be delivered about their fate. When that passed, the United States and other Western allies renewed their representations in Belgrade, fearing that public outrage in France could delay the signing of the

Bosnia peace agreement in Paris on Thursday.

Yesterday afternoon the Yugoslav defence minister, Pavle Bulatovic, told a visiting Nato delegation he expected a "positive statement" on the pilots. Later, the White House spokesman in Washington said the US was "very hopeful" that the men would soon be set free.

On 5 September President Chirac said he held the Serbian leader Slobodan Milosevic responsible for the pilots. Three covert helicopter rescue missions were launched by Nato on 6, 7 and 8 September to try to get them out. All three failed.

The Foreign Minister, Hervé de Charette, then met his Serbian counterpart, Milan Milutinovic, in Belgrade and demanded information about the men. The Serbian minister said he knew nothing. When the two met again at the UN in New York, Mr de Charette was given the same brush-off.

But on 28 September *Paris Match* magazine published photographs proving the two men had been captured alive by the Bosnian Serbs. Mr de Charette went back to Belgrade and took up the case with Mr Milosevic.

The French were further enraged by the lies and evasions of the Bosnian Serb leader, Radovan Karadzic. "He said first he didn't know anything," said a senior French official. "Then he said he knew who held them but he had no leverage."

Then he claimed that Muslim bandits had kidnapped them. Finally he said they were in the hands of freelance Serbs.

The French grimly linked every stage of their participation in the Bosnia peace process to the men's fate. "The French delegate at the Dayton, Ohio, talks raised the matter every day with each of the parties," a French official said. "Later on we obtained commitments from all sides to do all they could. These were not honoured."

Last Wednesday President Chirac telephoned Mr Milosevic and warned him of "multiple consequences" if the men were not released. One day later the French Foreign Ministry spokesman was authorised to threaten "consequences that would hit those holding the men and those who had failed to honour their engagements".

On Friday Mr de Charette played his ace card, telling the 32 countries and organisations at the London Conference that the situation was "intolerable" and that France would reserve its freedom of action unless the men were freed by Sunday night.

So strong was the French statement that the US and its allies went into overdrive to manifest "solidarity" with the French. In Belgrade, the US special envoy and the British chargé d'affaires added their voices to those urging Mr Milosevic to use his muscle with the Bosnian Serbs.



Cry freedom: Students demonstrating their support in Sarajevo yesterday for a united city

Photograph: Danilo Krstanovic/Reuters

British forces prepare to confront looting Croats

EMMA DAILY
Mrkonj Grad

British peace-keepers in Bosnia are moving towards the front lines of northern Bosnia to prepare for their renaissance in 10 days' time as heavily armed Nato troops on a mission to enforce the Dayton peace plan. But with blue berets still in evidence, they are faced to stand by as local Croat forces torch and loot the towns surrendered to the Serbs under the Dayton plan.

In the past two weeks, around 60 per cent of housing in Sipovo and about 30 per cent in Mrkonj Grad, as well as at least four neighbouring villages, have been razed by Bosnian Croat soldiers - after being stripped of stoves, fridges, furniture and other goods. The level of arson has fallen, but flames and smoke mark the latest targets in the area; countless other houses are roofless and scorched.

"We immediately protested at the highest levels to the [Bosnian Croat militia] that this was sending all the wrong signals,"

said Brigadier Andrew Dannat, the commander of British UN troops, who will lead a British brigade in Nato's peace implementation force (I-For).

The burning began in earnest about 10 days ago - just after the signing of the Dayton plan that will return the area to Serb control - but has diminished in intensity since the British protests. However, a cloud of white smoke rose from a house on the hill overlooking Mrkonj Grad on Sunday, while a building in Sipovo smouldered gently, its roof charred and caved in, just down the street from an HVO truck and a small group of soldiers.

Obviously, one main bridge into Mrkonj Grad has been wired with explosives and is ready to blow. There seems to be very little battle damage in either town but dozens of buildings are blackened by fire, discarded booty lies all around and timber stands ready to help new blazes. The roots of this wanton destruction - pure spite against the returning Serbs - can be seen nearby: the weed-filled shells of Muslim and Croat

houses burnt in the same way by Serbs earlier in the war.

UN officials say they have no mandate to stop the vandalism, but are extremely concerned about the precedent set - especially in the Serb-held suburbs of Sarajevo that are due to revert to government rule next month. Still, the burning and looting can be seen as a good omen for the British division of I-For: it is clear the Bosnian Croat militia does not intend to contest the Dayton demand that it withdraw from the area.

Brig Dannat said the civilian Croat authorities are pulling out already. Some critics fear UN inaction over the Croat destruction - especially in the case of troops who will merely switch their blue berets for green - risks consolidating the culture of compromise (some would say appeasement) that characterised the UN mission.

The brigadier rejects such arguments. "I expect to have a totally different regime in a totally different environment after December 19th," he said. He is ready to use overwhelming force if the warring factions fail

to comply with their Dayton obligations.

"One would threaten and then use military force that would be extremely powerful," he said. "I'll make it quite clear to the parties."

Brig Dannat, who has had extensive and, he says, effective conversations on the topic with Croat and Muslim commanders, is hoping to meet the Serb commander in Banja Luka soon to make the same point. His men are equally keen.

"We should just drive straight through," muttered one soldier, stamping his feet against the cold at a Croat checkpoint in Mrkonj Grad that had found fault with the paperwork provided by a British convoy of Warrior armoured vehicles. They were sent back to a Croat base to discuss exactly how they would reach their destination: a prospective base for British I-For troops in the town.

The brigadier does not expect any such scenarios after 19 December. "Freedom of movement [for I-For] is not even a discussion topic," he said. "There are no papers involved."

Alarming rise in child soldiers

GLENDIA COOPER

Children are becoming deliberate targets of war, with more than 2 million killed in the last decade. 10 million severely traumatised and hundreds of thousands more involved in actual fighting, according to the United Nations Children's Fund.

Commemorating its 50th anniversary, Unicef has launched a 10-point anti-war agenda, aiming to reduce the impact of armed conflict on children.

In its latest annual report, *The State of the World's Children 1996*, it says: "It is the single characteristic of warfare in our time that children suffer most... The death and suffering of

children cannot be tolerated."

The report was launched in London yesterday.

Children have always been caught up in war but the dangers have been intensified. In the First World War civilians accounted for 14 per cent of the victims. By the Second World War it was close to 70 per cent and by 1990 almost 90 per cent.

In the last decade it is estimated that 2 million children have been killed, 4-5 million disabled, 12 million made homeless, more than 1 million orphaned or separated from their parents and some 10 million psychologically traumatised.

One of the most disturbing aspects of recent conflicts is the "frightening escalation" in the use of children as soldiers. In 1988 alone 200,000 were fighting.

In 1986, the Uganda National Resistance Army had 3,000 child soldiers. In Liberia a quarter of combatants were children - 20,000 in all. And in Angola 7 per cent of children had fired at someone, accord-

CHILDREN OF WAR APPEAL



ing to a 1995 survey.

"Children have no place fighting in wars," Carol Bellamy, Unicef's executive director, said. "Yet thousands, even hundreds of thousands... do fight." She called for an optional protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child raising the minimum age for military recruitment from 15 to 18.

■ *The State of the World's Children 1996*: Unicef, £5.95

■ *The Independent's* appeal to readers to support four charities working to help child victims of the wars in former Yugoslavia has so far raised a total of £58,000. Has been donated so far. Readers can use the printed form left to donate.

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international

Austria's hills are alive to the sound of money

At first glance, Austria seems a leading candidate to participate in the single European currency scheduled for launch in January 1999. Austrians enjoy one of the world's highest living standards, inflation is low, and the schilling has remained fixed in the German mark for a decade while other European currencies have fallen by the wayside. Yet this happy picture is deceptive in several important respects. Austria's government, a coalition of social democrats and conservatives, collapsed last October over how to reduce the budget deficit, forcing a general election next Sunday.

Like a majority of European Union members, Austria faces a difficult battle to meet the 1999 deadline and bring down its deficit to 3 per cent of Gross Domestic Product, the level stipulated by the Maastricht treaty for countries hoping to be part of monetary union. According to a study by economists at Salomon Brothers, Austria's deficit will be 5.5 per cent of GDP this year – higher even than in France, where budget-

In the first of a series, **Tony Barber** looks at problems posed by the EMU

cutting measures have provoked widespread social unrest. Moreover, Austria's public debt, at a projected 68 per cent of GDP this year, is above the 60 per cent required under the Maastricht terms. The 1999 deadline means the next government will have to make some fast and painful decisions if Austria is to qualify for monetary union.

Wolfgang Schüssel, the leader of the conservative People's Party, insists that radical cuts in pensions and welfare payments are the only way forward. "I am not sure Austria can and will reach the criteria for monetary union," he said. "That is the main reason we are having elections."

An attempt to introduce such cuts could have a significant impact on Austrian perceptions of the EU and on the domestic political scene. Austrians voted for EU membership by a two-to-one majority in a June 1994 ref-

erendum, but the honeymoon is definitely over.

Recent polls suggest 60 per cent of Austrians now consider it was a bad move to join the EU. As for monetary union, 54.5 per cent oppose giving up the schilling for the single currency and only 38.6 per cent support it.

There is clearly a risk that these levels of disillusion and scepticism will rise if Austria's next government imposes austerity measures that the general public associates with an attempt to participate in monetary union. The most obvious beneficiary in political terms would be Jörg Haider, the far-right leader of the Freedom Party, who has denounced the planned single European currency as a fraud. Support for Mr Haider's party is running at about 25 per cent, compared with 31 per cent for the Social Democrats and 30 per cent for the People's Party.



Striking background: Parisians getting a green light to cross the Champs Elysées in front of the Arc de Triomphe
Photograph: Lionel Cironneau/AP

Juppé fails to break deadlock over strikes

STEPHEN JESSEL
Paris

Little progress toward ending 18 days of strike chaos emerged yesterday from Alain Juppé's talks with leaders of France's main trade union organisations.

"There is no way out of the crisis for the moment," said Louis Vianet, head of the CGT federation, which includes many railwaymen who have spearheaded the strikes, after meeting the Prime Minister.

Marc Blondel, leader of the Force Ouvrière grouping and one of the most bitter critics of Mr Juppé's plan to reform the social security system, said before his meeting with the Prime Minister that he was optimistic.

Afterwards he said that he thought Mr Juppé was open to eventual negotiation but was counting on the strikes losing momentum. Mr Blondel said the fixing of a date for talks would be "the cherry on the cake". The sooner there were "global negotiations, the sooner there would be a global peace", he added.

FO had dropped its demand that Mr Juppé abandon his reform plans, announced on 15 November, before any talks could take place.

Mr Juppé's series of meetings, which included one with Jean Gandois, the head of the employers' federation, the CNPF, followed his announcement in a television interview on Sunday that he was ready to meet union leaders and take part in a "social summit on employment".

During the interview, he announced concessions largely aimed at the railwaymen. These included the indefinite withdrawal of a new agreement between the state and the railway system which, according to the unions, would have entailed line closures and job losses; a reaffirmation of the existing pension arrangements for drivers, and the suspension of a committee set up to look at special pension arrangements for certain categories of workers.

Mr Juppé said he was ready to talk about youth employment and the length of the working week. But he made it clear that there was no question of withdrawing his plan to reform social security. These proposals are to be introduced by decree although the opposition will bring forward a motion of censure in the National Assembly today, in a vain attempt to stop that process.

According to the government, the strikes are starting to fray at the edges. It said 3.5 per cent of public sector workers were on strike compared with 18.5 per cent at the end of last week. In the education sector, 19 per cent of staff were on strike.

But Paris and many other big cities are still affected by public transport strikes. The Paris Metro and suburban RER systems were closed and only one bus in 20 was running. Huge traffic jams again built up in and around the city.

Toulouse, Marseilles, Bordeaux, Lyons, Rennes and Avignon were also hit in varying degrees. The railway system remained paralysed and postal services were again disrupted, even though the proportion of strikers was said to have fallen from 6 per cent last week to 4 per cent yesterday.



Louis Vianet: 'No way out of the crisis'

The CGT and FO unions, as well as a teachers' group, have called another day of action and demonstrations for today. No newspapers are expected to appear today.

If the government needed a reminder of its unpopularity it came in the form of by-election reverses over the weekend. The government held only two of the seven seats being contested. Four of the remaining five went to the Socialists and the fifth to another left-wing party, the Movement of Citizens.

The loss of three of the five seats to the left had been predicted, but the results in the other two districts was a surprise. In one, President Jacques Chirac had won 61 per cent of the vote in the presidential election in May.

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international

Six die in Madrid car-bomb blast

ELIZABETH NASH
Madrid

A huge car bomb exploded in a working-class suburb of Madrid yesterday, killing six people and wounding at least 18, three seriously. The explosion caused extensive damage in a crowded area. It destroyed several nearby vehicles and narrowly missed a school bus full of children.

The blast comes days before Europe's heads of government converge on the city for the European Union summit at the weekend. It follows the deaths on Sunday of two Basque policemen who were shot in the back in the Basque region of Guipuzcoa. The young man accused of their murder had apparently taken part in previous Eta assaults.

One of the six victims of yesterday's attack died of his injuries shortly after being taken to hospital. Another was an elderly woman who was passing by. The four others who died were the occupants of the vehicle, which was destroyed: civilian drivers and mechanics employed by the navy.

The Defence Minister, Gustavo Suarez Pertierra, who visited the scene, described the attack as "useless" and "nutraceutical". The perpetrators would not achieve their goals, he said.

The events could not have occurred at a worse time for the government, which has been doing everything in its power for months to ensure that the European summit on Friday and Saturday passes off smoothly.

The attack heightens fears of further violence by the Basque separatist group Eta, which last struck in Madrid in June when a policeman was blown up by a car bomb in the centre of the capital. The latest attack, like that in June, is attributed to Eta's Madrid command, whose structure the authorities acknowledge remains intact.

In April, the leader of the conservative opposition Popular Party (PP), Jose Maria Aznar, narrowly escaped death when 50kg of explosives destroyed the vehicle in which he was travelling. Only the strength of the armour-plating on Mr Aznar's car saved him. In August, police foiled an Eta plot to kill King Juan Carlos near his summer palace on the island of Majorca.

Unlike the long rapprochement that eventually brought peace between the British government and the IRA, there has never been any official suggestion in Spain that Eta's armed struggle, the last home-grown guerrilla war in Europe, could be ended by negotiation. Indeed, when a former secret security chief was last week accused by Basque police of handing Eta a proposed plan for negotiation, his alleged action was interpreted as an act of criminal folly.

None the less, Spain's secret security services, capable of logging even the private telephone conversations of the king, have been incapable of preventing a stream of terrorist attacks against carefully chosen political targets.

At the weekend, Herri Batasuna, Eta's political wing, elected a new hardline leadership in accordance with what the party called "the passing from the stage of resistance to a stage of offensive".

Yesterday's attack brings to 13 the number of people killed by terrorists this year. The first attack was in January when a policeman was shot dead in Bilbao.

Three days later, the PP leader in the Basque country, Gregorio Ordóñez, was shot dead in a San Sebastian restaurant. In the most recent attack before yesterday's, an army captain was seriously wounded in a car bomb attack on 10 November; both his legs were amputated.



Slaughter in the suburbs: Police and firemen inspect the devastation at the scene of the car bomb in Madrid

Photograph: AP

Peking promises 'open' trial for Wei Jing

Peking — China's definition of "open" and "public" will be put to the test tomorrow when the court's spokesman, Chen Xiong, said proceedings would be "open to the public" — and started taking applications from foreign journalists for a seat at the trial. By the end of the day, it was still unclear whether the government was about to break

with precedent. Political trials in China are routinely held behind closed doors, with only close family members of the accused allowed to attend, and hand-picked observers to fill the courtroom — conditions which China describes as "open". Mr Chen, after first saying that Mr

Wei's trial would be open to Chinese people, later decided that locals also had to apply to attend.

Some indication of the quality of Chinese justice was given by Mr Chen's description of the current "investigative phase". He explained: "Before the open hearing, the court interrogates

the defendant and then investigates whether the charges put forward by the procuratorate are true."

The trial will open at 9am, and Mr Wei, in detention since April 1994 after meeting a US government human rights official, could be sentenced the same day.

Hotpot king cooks up a fortune in China's backwater

TERESA POOLE
Yinchuan City

"I don't like to go to the south of China, because I feel unbalanced when I come back to Ningxia," said Liu Dehua, who has just returned from a trip to the Special Economic Zone in Shenzhen, bordering Hong Kong. "You see how advanced they are, and when you come back to Ningxia, everything looks wrong in your eyes."

"The government should now shift attention to the north-west of China, otherwise it will be too late," he added. "At the moment, the difference between inland and coastal areas of China is, maybe, 50 years."

Mr Liu, 52, is no scrounger. He is one of the biggest private businessmen in one of China's poorest provinces. His hotpot restaurant in Yinchuan City, the

provincial capital of Ningxia, is packed. He has just imported 30,000 ducks from near Shanghai to set up the biggest duck-egg production facility in the north-west. His family is settling into their new 1m yuan (£80,000) house.

His is a rare character in inland China, a restless self-made man and a Communist Party member with an appetite for risk, whose expressive hands never stop moving as he describes his latest business plan.

Toasting our health with Ningxia's best red wine, he says frankly: "The senior leaders in the north-west — their minds are not liberated."

Born in Yinchuan, Mr Liu liberated himself from the state system in 1987. The son of a revolutionary martyr killed by the Nationalist Kuomintang in 1947, he says he "was very, very

naughty" as a child and left before finishing middle school. He started his state-sector career as an electrician, then became a truck driver and in 1975 joined a collective clothing factory.

At the factory he took control of the vehicle repair shop and quickly turned in a profit for the collective. On the side, he set up a private vehicle-interior fitting shop and by 1988 he had enough cash to buy the Delongliu (virtuous, thriving) building where his restaurant opened the following year.

Mr Liu's empire now includes a petrol station, a sound-and-light equipment business and the most ambitious venture so far — all those ducks, with a predicted daily production of 26,000 eggs.

"I always think, why do I work so hard? My hair went white; it used to be black. In the past I

was an extremely open person. I had a lot of hobbies, playing musical instruments and singing, swimming, skating. Now I have abandoned all my hobbies," he exclaimed, with all the theatricality of a former singer in a Cultural Revolution state entertainment troupe.

In 1989, his was the first private restaurant in Ningxia and, with a capacity for 250, it is still the biggest. As Mr Liu knows, the remote Ningxia Hui Autonomous Zone is more than a decade behind much of China in waking up to the message of Deng Xiaoping's "reform and opening" policies. Many of Ningxia's 5 million people still live below the poverty line. The province, a 24-hour train ride from Peking, is drought-stricken, a majority of its big state industries are loss-making, and most of its old-fashioned cadres

are not equipped to drag Ningxia into the 21st century.

Somewhat belatedly, China's central government is now concerned at the huge wealth gap between the coastal and inland regions, the legacy of geographical inequalities plus 15 years of policies which favoured already fast-growing regions. The recently agreed Ninth Five Year Plan (1996-2000) is designed to redress the imbalance, but the details are still scarce.

Yuan Erzhao, of Ningxia's provincial Economy Committee, admits the average annual income of Ningxia's state enterprise workers is less than 3,000 yuan (£240) compared with more than 8,000 yuan in Shanghai. Mr Yuan says the new Five Year Plan specifies that 600 yuan (nearly £500m) will be spent on modernising the best of Ningxia's state-owned

enterprises. The only problem is that 60 per cent of this is supposed to be borrowed from the credit-squeezed banks.

Yet in Mr Liu's restaurant, which caters for Ningxia's Hui Muslims by serving lamb instead of pork, the tables are full of (mostly male) locals for whom life is improving, even if they are not in the same world as Shenzhen. Poverty is relative in China. Yinchuan now boasts reasonably stocked department stores and dozens of bustling private restaurants to compete with Mr Liu's. "Since 1990, private business has got off the ground in Ningxia," he said.

Are his three children following in their father's footsteps? Far from it. Two are in government office jobs, and the third has just finished three years in the army. "My children are not as open-minded as me."



There is more to it than that: "I have experienced a lot since 1958, and who knows what the future will be?" he said. "The government jobs are safe and reliable, though the salary is low. In the future, if there are problems, I will have to shoulder those problems alone."

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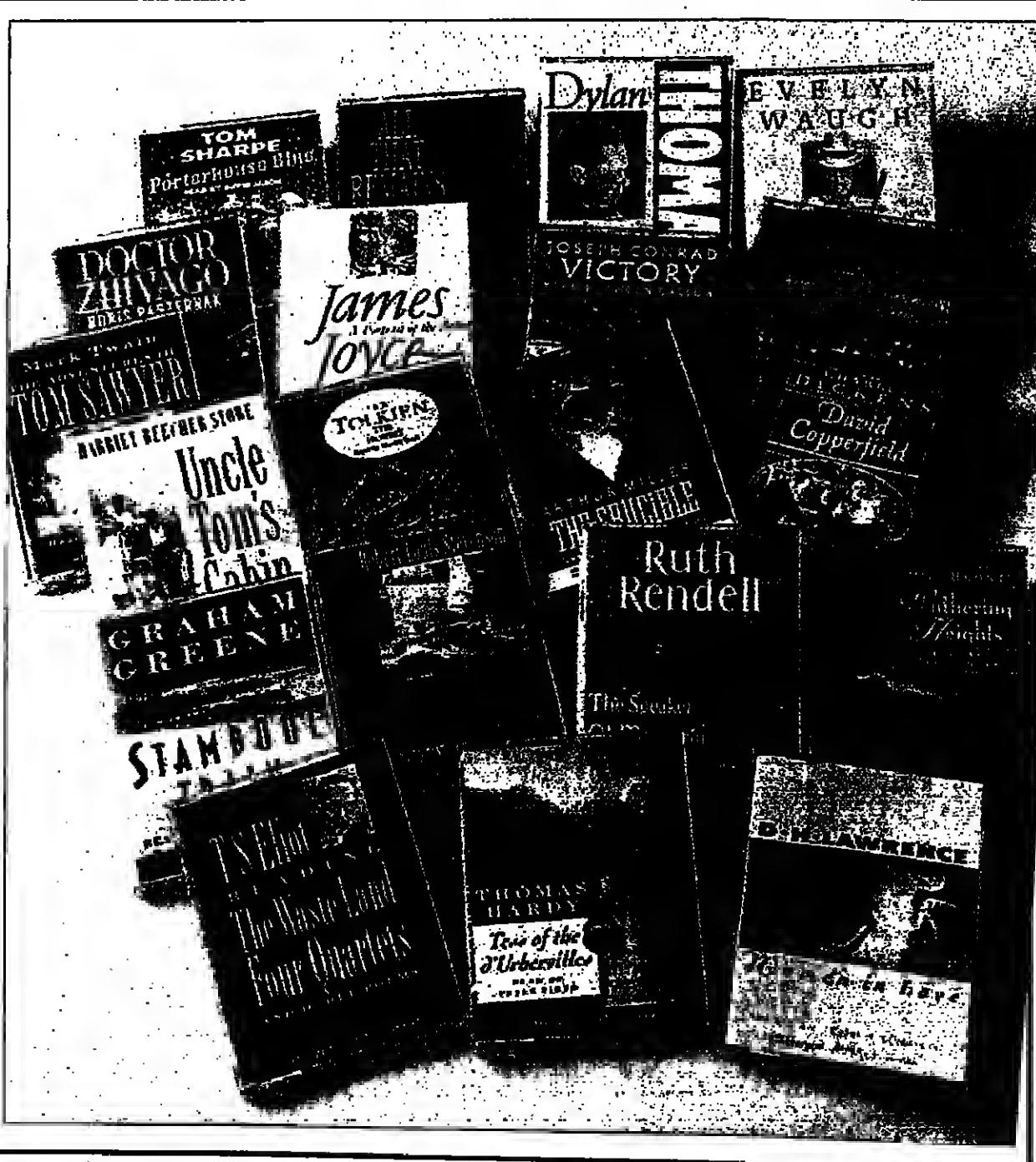
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صکرا من الامل

Haiti elections: As polling day approaches, even the police must be protected by UN troops

Slum gangs prove a headache for Clinton

By ILL DAVISON
in Port-au-Prince, Haiti

His Max Vital, the police commissaire, stood almost to attention as he told us that his men were outnumbered by the gangs in his precinct, the suburban slum district of Cité Soleil outside Haiti's capital, Port-au-Prince. He stood because there were chairs in the bare, stone-walled "office", little bigger than a public toilet booth; to entice, because he was clear-headed to be at the head of 100 men at the age of 24. Because of this seething slum's reputation as a centre of violence, political and otherwise, Vital is an important member of the new, US-trained, Haitian National Police, formed under President Jean Bertrand Aristide to replace the dreadful military-led police force of former years. His preoccupation is the possibility of armed attacks by a shadowy new group called the Armée Rouge (Red Army) in its "city" of 200,000 souls, on Haiti's presidential election day 1 Sunday. The well-armed group - most foreign observers used here prefer to call them gang - is thought to have provoked a series of incidents in recent weeks, including an attack on the police station late last month which freed seven Red Army prisoners and forced Mr Vital and his men to flee. They returned, looking as if they could under the circumstances, at dawn last Friday, but only under the protection of several platoons of US and Bangladeshi soldiers from the United Nations peace-keeping force which has been in the building ever since. Mr Vital, in a tennis shirt and blue jeans, said his men could not fight the Red Army with the help of their UN friends. But what will happen after 29 February next year, when the UN troops are due to pull out, is another question. The US and its allies are discussing leaving behind some soldiers and police officers to bolster security after the scheduled departure date. In the meantime, the main preoccupation here is whether the Red Army, or other newly blossomed groups such as the Saddam Hussein faction in the

north of the country, will attempt to disrupt Sunday's election to replace Mr Aristide. With US troops moving into Bosnia, the possibility that 2,500 American troops could be sucked in and forced to stay on in Haiti is one that President Bill Clinton cannot relish. Most foreign observers here do not take the new groups particularly seriously, but concede that they may be revamped versions of earlier militias, dismantled after last year's US military intervention, and could prove disruptive. "The Red Army is a revolutionary group," said Mr Vital, confirming its existence to the media for the first time. "If they were old Tonton Macoutes, we would know who they are," he added, referring to the feared militiamen who terrorised the population under the Duvalier dynasty. "We estimated there are 200 of them in Cité Soleil, scattered in small cells." "We think they've come from various political groups and are essentially mercenary," Mr Vital added. "They're dangerous only if they can bring the people with them, and here the people are against them. They may be well-armed... but we have the spirit to defeat them." Because Cité Soleil is a swarming, stinking mass of shanty homes, rubbish dumps, sewers, humans and animals, making it easy for gunmen to fire and disappear, Mr Vital's men do not venture out on foot. They use unmarked pickup trucks, often accompanied by jeeps packed with UN troops - usually from Third World countries such as Bangladesh, who are welcomed more warmly than Americans or Europeans. Outside the police station, Chief Inspector Adi Hinner of the Austrian police, an adviser with the UN force, told us: "I think everybody's a bit nervous about the elections. A lot depends on Aristide, what he tells his people." He noted that the so-called Interim Police Force set up by Mr Aristide as a transitional force, and still including military personnel, had not yet been disbanded despite a presidential decree last week. Commenting on the new Haitian police force, Mr Hinner said: "There are some good officers, and some bad, as in any police force."



Popular support: René Préval takes the stage at a rally in Haiti. He is expected to succeed Jean Bertrand Aristide, the island's first democratically elected President in next Sunday's vote. Photograph: AP/Daniel Morel

Africans block Nigeria boycott

By ROBERT BLOCK
Johannesburg

President Nelson Mandela failed yesterday to rally southern African leaders to his campaign to punish Nigeria's military regime for last month's execution of nine minority rights activists. A meeting in Pretoria of the representatives of the 12-member Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) backed international efforts to push Nigeria towards democracy but refused to take an initiative of its own. The SADC leaders said it would be "unwise" for any of them to make individual policy statements on Nigeria. Mr Mandela had called the meeting under the pretence of reviewing Commonwealth initiatives to force democratic change in Nigeria. But according to government sources, he really wanted to galvanise regional support for his call to boycott Nigeria's oil exports. But such a development was unlikely after the US Vice-President, Al Gore, appeared non-committal about Mr Mandela's campaign during an official visit last week. In a further setback, the Secretary-General

of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU), Salim Ahmed Salim, said on Friday that he did not support a campaign to isolate Nigeria. The United States, the European Union and some African countries have imposed an arms embargo on Nigeria and withdrawn ambassadors, but only Germany and France are sympathetic to Mr Mandela's call for an oil embargo. Faced with such overwhelming opposition, Mr Mandela sought to dispel the impression that sanctions were on the agenda of yesterday's meeting. When asked if he was still pursuing his call for action against Nigeria, Mr Mandela replied: "All possible options are not excluded... any such options must be through the [Commonwealth] structure." The Commonwealth has chosen a committee of eight member states, including South Africa, to look at ways to foment democracy in Nigeria. The SADC meeting had been billed as a summit, but only five of the body's 12 heads of state turned up. Only Zimbabwe, Namibia, Botswana and Malawi were represented at the highest level, while the others sent lower-ranking officials.

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IN BRIEF

Ebola fever outbreak feared in Liberia

Geneva — A medical team that crossed into Liberia to investigate a possible outbreak of ebola fever, has discovered four more suspected cases, the World Health Organisation announced. The five-member team visited the home of a 25-year-old Liberian refugee who was confirmed on Friday as having the highly contagious virus. They found two men sick with fever and extreme fatigue, possible early signs of ebola infection. They have been isolated in their home, WHO said. Another woman in the house has been hospitalised in the Ivory Coast with symptoms similar to ebola fever. AP

Papandreou takes a turn for the worse

Athens — Premier Andreas Papandreou's health again worsened and a new infection forced doctors to place him on a respirator. You must understand that when a man has a fever and is put on a respirator it means the situation is dangerous, Doctor Dimitrios Vlachakos said. Mr Papandreou developed a fever in the early afternoon which "is indicative of an infection." AP

5 bids to revive Israel-Syria peace talks

Washington — President Bill Clinton said he was sending the Secretary of State, Warren Christopher, to the Middle East to restart peace talks between Israel and Syria. Mr Clinton made the announcement after talks at the White House with the Israeli Prime Minister, Shimon Peres. He said he had also talked by telephone with the Syrian President, Hafez al-Assad. Mr Christopher was set to depart on Thursday for the Middle East after attending the final peace accord signing in Paris. Reuters

Two tourists die in police car-chase ramming

Orlando, Florida — Two Germans visiting an acquaintance were killed when their car was rammed by a car fleeing from police. Liz Bar, 40, and Markus Rosknecht, died moments after the accident early on Sunday, said a police spokesman. The German tourists were residents of Spain. AP

Twist to Russian democracy

Moscow — A candidate for parliament said he was approached with an offer he had to refuse: a chance to have his opponents physically crippled. Grigory Beryozkin said a man who identified himself as Vasily Veshkin offered "special actions" to eliminate opposition in next Sunday's elections for a new Duma, or lower-house of parliament. Mr Beryozkin said that the offer included threats of car crashes, bomb attacks, fist fights and kidnappings. Costs ranged from \$7,000 (£4,600) for a car crash to \$15,000 for a bomb attack. AP

Met clerk dies after copycat fire attack

New York — A New York subway token booth clerk who was severely burned last month in an attack that copied a scene in a Hollywood film has died, police said. Harvey Kaufman, 50, a Hollywood film fan, died of his injuries on 26 November when he poured kerosene through the money slot at a subway station and ignited it, causing an explosion. Mr Kaufman was trapped and ignited it, causing an explosion. Mr Kaufman was trapped and ignited it, causing an explosion. Mr Kaufman was trapped and ignited it, causing an explosion. Reuters

Sir Charles Evans

news analysis

Richard Branson's biggest product is himself: and his rivals are feeling the force of his personality. Jonathan Glancey reports

The mogul who loves to be loved

When Richard Branson claims he was offered a bribe to drop his bid to run the National Lottery two years ago by Guy Snowden, a director of GTECH, an American company with a 22 per cent stake in Camelot, it is hard not to side with the bearded and be-jumpered plutocrat.

Why? Because whereas Camelot creams £1m a day running the Lottery, money that slips smoothly into well-lined pockets, Branson would have run it entirely as a charity, contributing a further £300m a year to worthy causes nationwide. That's our Richard: the businessman as folk hero, a capitalist Robin Hood.

There are other tempting reasons to back Branson. He has been victim of dirty tricks departments before. In fact, he is still fighting British Airways through the American courts, more than two years after he successfully sued the "world's favourite airline" for gaining transatlantic business unfairly at the expense of his own Virgin Atlantic.

He is liked, too, for making it big in business without having become pompous or having adopted the seemingly mandatory double-breasted suit. He is admired because, unlike so many get-rich-quick British businessmen, he has made his money not by raiding, stripping or taking over

existing companies, but by creating his own from scratch. Starting with the publication of *Sniden* magazine in 1968, Branson has moved on, up and through record shops, recording studios (remember Mike Oldfield's *Tubular Bells*? Branson certainly does; that

That's our Richard: the businessman as folk hero, a capitalist Robin Hood

album made him his first million), music publishing, nightclubs ("The Venue"), computer games, an airline, book publishing, post-production video facilities, condoms, fizzy drinks, vodka, a radio station (Virgin 1215 AM), a design company (with Rodney Fitch), a television station in Mexico ... and there's more.

Even when - as in soft

drinks and airlines - Branson invests in mainstream and established businesses, he does so with energy and panache, offering quality and polished service at prices that undercut those of rivals.

With a personal fortune of £750m or so, he was, at the last count, Britain's ninth richest businessman, yet manages to maintain his image as a slightly nerdy Jack-the-lad, happy to serve you coffee if he happens to be flying tourist class (which he will) on the same Virgin flight.

Of course, the very size of the Virgin empire means he is increasingly obliged to delegate. Yet it is Branson - his beard, toothsome grin, boyish charm and sense of adventure - we see in all Virgin's doings. Branson is to Virgin what Tony the Tiger is to Frosties or Super Mario is to Nintendo.

Without Branson and his frequent appearances in every conceivable publication from *Hello!* to *Pilot*, Virgin would not be taking 7.9 per cent (£35m) of the supermarket cola market, nor would Virgin Megastores have captured 23 per cent (£400m) of the

UK home entertainment market.

Virgin Cinemas has 23 per cent (£110m) of the UK cinema business now that Branson has acquired the MGM chain for £195m. Virgin Atlantic - his proudest boast - carries more than one in five air passengers (1.7m of them) to and fro between Britain and the United States.

Branson's remarkable success - he is still only 45 - reflects the growing power of the business communicator. Like Bill Gates, Terence Conran or Anita Roddick he sells his business by being able to communicate not just with the business world but with the media and the

public too. The key to all his businesses is the Virgin image and his own public charisma.

Branson's overt affability is not all secret. At the height of the British Airways debacle, the country's top 300 directors voted him the "most outstanding business communicator" in the UK. Branson received twice as many votes as the runner-up, Sir John Harvey Jones, who is no slouch himself. A month later, in November 1993, he was voted the director most small British companies would like to have on their board.

The man is rarely out of the news. Here he is (saucy chap) appearing with Pamela Anderson

and Yasmine Blechie in the 100th episode of *Baywatch* (conveniently coinciding with the launch of Virgin Energy, a soft drink promoted by Pamela Anderson). Here he is buying his wife Joan a £2m house in Holland Park as a wedding present; here he is, a few years down the line, selling the same house for a cool £4m.

When Branson turned the family Range-Rover upside down on the A40 last June (on the way back from a late-night promotional tennis bash at Planet Hollywood), a policeman called to the scene said, "we are certain Mr Branson was not to blame in any way."

Sergeant Williams said it all: as if anyone would blame the bearded boy prankster. There are no lies on Richard Branson; even his accidents are opportunities.

Playing Robin Hood to Lord King's Sheriff of Nottingham has, however, been Branson's business masterstroke. Since selling Virgin's record business to Thorn EMI for half-a-billion or so in 1992, Branson has pumped at least £115m of his own money into

his airline. He is determined to succeed and in plans just unveiled he has British Airways firmly in his sights.

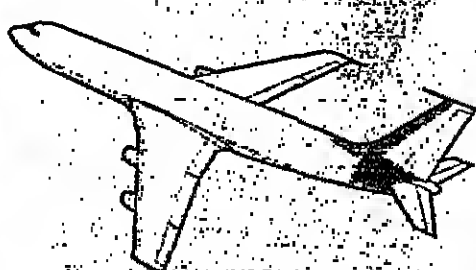
Branson learnt to steal the limelight when he started Virgin Atlantic Airways in 1984. Where Sir Freddie Laker had failed with his transatlantic

Sir Freddie, "you've got to get the public on your side," Branson went "public" in 1984, charming the public into the seats of his second-hand Jumbos.

Self-deprecating charm, however, has not always won the day for Branson. In June 1993 he made a bid to take over Radio 4. Why should a man who made his first million in pop suddenly care about Purcell? "Maybe I am coming into the category of boring old fart," said Branson, then 43, to the Commons Heritage Committee. Joe Ashton, Labour MP and committee member, thought it was more because Branson wanted to push his own records. Others concurred. Branson invested in his own radio station, Virgin 1215, instead. The studio is at the heart of his Oxford Street megastore, so, up to a point, Ashton was right: radio broadcasting and record sales went hand in hand.

Yet, no one seems to mind Branson's blatant self-publicity. Journalists like him, the public likes him and his public business philosophy "you don't have to be a bastard to succeed; in fact all bastards fail" cannot fail to win over everyone who has ever fought treacherous rivals (and colleagues) from John Major to Freddie Laker via every one of us. Big business might be a bit like a lottery, but no one likes a bastard getting to the top. And no bastard looks, acts or plays his hand like Richard "Robin Hood" (but bloody rich) Branson.

THE VIRGIN BUSINESS EMPIRE

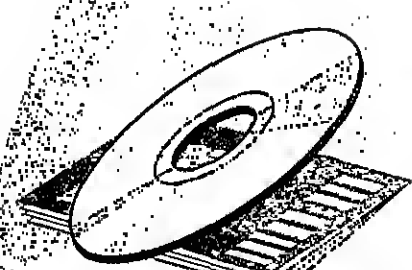
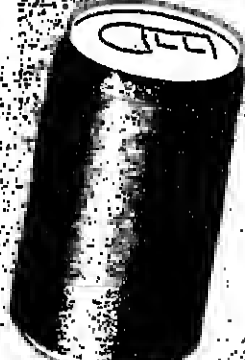


VIRGIN ATLANTIC

Launched in 1984, Virgin Atlantic Airways has an annual turnover of £600m and a 22% share of the British transatlantic market. The airline carries 169 million passengers each year.

VIRGIN COLA

Launched in November 1994, it takes 79% of the supermarket cola market. Turnover is £35m. Other products in the Virgin Trading Company Group include Virgin Vodka and Virgin Lips.

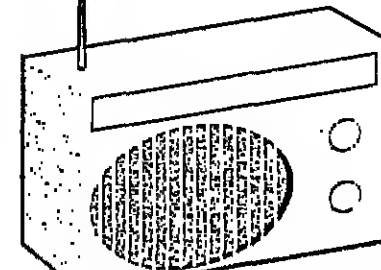
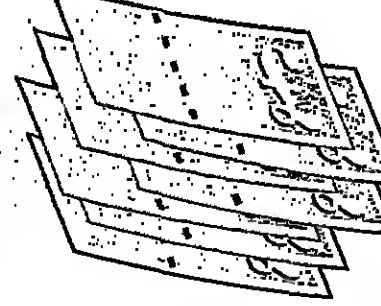


VIRGIN DIRECT FINANCIAL SERVICES

Virgin Direct has sold £100m worth of Personal Equity Plans in the nine months since it was launched in March this year. It has so far taken 10% of the PEPs market, selling 30,000 over the phone.

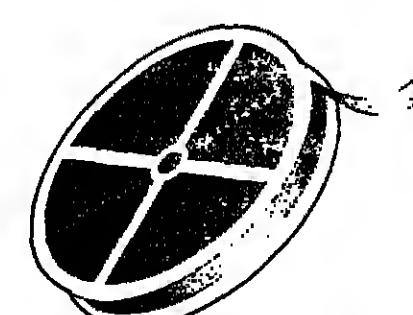
VIRGIN MEGASTORES

The Virgin Megastore concept was launched in 1988, and the 47th UK Megastore is opened in Carlisle today. The annual turnover in the UK is £400m. The company turns over £700m worldwide. Virgin Megastores takes 25% of the UK home entertainment market, 6% worldwide.



VIRGIN RADIO

Established in 1993 Virgin Radio has 4.6 million listeners nationwide. Virgin FM (London and South-east only) takes 4.5% of the market and Virgin AM (nationwide) takes 4.2% of the market. Virgin Radio had a turnover of £10m to July 1995.



VIRGIN CINEMAS

Virgin acquired the MGM chain in July 1995 in a £195m deal. The company owns 40% of the chain. MGM cinemas had a turnover of £100m last year, taking 23% of the UK cinema market.

One would think that with all the constant replaying of the 14-year-old archive footage of the Wales's wedding in recent weeks, the BBC might have glanced twice at the household cavalryman interviewed on that glorious morning. He turns out to be Captain James Hewitt, who brought such comfort in later years to the Princess - before proving to be a total cad.

In the morning before the Royals go into the church Selina Scott interviews the dashing soldier, resplendent in his glittering breastplate and military gear. For a few seconds there is a voice-over with him talking about the duties of the Household Cavalry on the great day - although, sadly, the incisive Ms Scott did not ask for his predictions on the prospects of the not-so-happy couple, nor his assessment of the bride's attractions.

It seems that ignorance of this clip has cost the BBC financially. When I rang to check it, the librarian was astonished. "But he can't be on it, because once his name cropped up and we needed footage, we couldn't find any. We've had to shoot some more."

I hope Major Hewitt is properly grateful to Eagle Eye. No doubt he would prefer to see stills of himself in uniform to the current ones being peddled in the tabloids of him pushing a trolley full of cheap cider.

Tony Blair may or may not be perturbed; but he will not be receiving the united support of the quintessential Champagne socialists, the playwright Harold Pinter and his wife, the writer Lady Antonia Fraser. The couple famously started a group of like-minded socialist thinkers to support Neil Kinnock



seven years ago. But over lunch yesterday they seemed divided as to Blair's merits. "I am a Blairite," said Lady Antonia. "I'm not such a Blairite as Antonia is," retorted Pinter. "In fact, I'm hardly a Blairite at all."

Lady Antonia added: "I now have considerable unease about show-business personalities speaking up for political parties. I would personally like to meet the unemployed voting person who has never voted Labour but when he saw Madonna voting Labour, he decided to." Her husband was astounded - and not just because Madonna is American. "Show business?" he queried, aghast. "Surely we are the arts."

Civil servants at the Government's Benefits Agency have received a heartfelt and highly confidential written plea from their chief executive, Peter Mathison. "Like all large organisations, there may be occasions where staff feel they have genuine concerns over practices, procedures and situations they view as inefficient, unfair or improper. This does not, however, justify the subsequent disruption and effect on the morale of colleagues that taking any such concern to the media entails ... This letter is to remind staff of their responsibilities as civil servants and of the proper channels through which any grievance should be aired." In other words, don't leak however unhappy you may be. I regret that unhappiness at the Benefits Agency

appears to be so rife that this "don't leak" letter has been speedily leaked.

The launch of the International Interfaith Centre at the Athenaeum club was a sombre occasion, as befits an enterprise led by figures so eminent as the Prince of Wales, the Bishop of Oxford, and the Dalai Lama. But when Bishop Charles Henderson, chairman of the Roman Catholic Committee for Other Faiths, got up to speak, to everybody's surprise he told the following joke:

"There are three men in a hospital and the doctor asks each of them what they think is the best invention of the 20th century. The first replies: 'Heart transplants because otherwise it would have been curtains for me'. The second replies: 'Kidney transplants because otherwise it would have been curtains for me'. And the third replies: 'Venetian blinds because otherwise it would have been curtains for all of us'."

In secular circles this is a reasonable joke. In spiritual circles it is hysterical. The audience was rolling in the aisles. "I wanted to get it in before Rabbi Hugo Gryn did," the bishop explained yesterday. "I had to take my chance because I was speaking before him. Normally, he gets a story in before me."

Unfortunately, the bishop then rather spoilt it by trying a little too hard to explain the joke. "It is meant to show how things can be misunderstood and misinterpreted," he said.



Novel feat: Thompson and Winslet

rectified this omission. In her film adaptation of *Sense and Sensibility*, which opens next February, Miss Thompson as Elinor Dashwood and Kate Winslet as her sister Marianne lie in bed together playing footsie - presumably the sort of thing that passed for entertainment in the days before television - until Marianne complains that Elinor's feet are too cold. None of this in the book, of course. Perhaps Miss Thompson has been following the bizarre correspondence in the *London Review of Books* about whether Austen herself shared a bed with her sister Cassandra. Or perhaps Emma felt that the novelist needed a bit of spicing up. As Ms Thompson noted in her diary about the making of the film: "Kissing Hugh (Grant) was very lovely. Glad I invented it. Can't rely on Austen for a smog, that's for sure."

Eagle Eye



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Someone worth calling mayor

Margaret Thatcher's premiership, in the way that she dominated both the executive and legislature, made her more presidential than any other peacetime British leader. Tony Blair, it seems from today's interview published opposite, intends to follow her example. We can expect him to focus attention and power on himself. Under him, prime minister's questions would be held once rather than twice a week, with the premier answering questions in prearranged subject areas. The event would be intended to promote grown-up, dignified politics – cool but tough questioning – and reduce the traditional tendency for abusive exchanges in the Commons hear pit.

Mr Blair's plans for local government are more radical. He would introduce directly elected mayors, breaking with the British tradition that governmental chief executives – be they prime ministers or council leaders – are elected by legislative representatives (MPs or councillors).

He is not the first serious politician to put forward this proposal in recent years. It is no coincidence that it was first championed by Michael Heseltine, that other presidential figure in British politics, who in the mid-Eighties sought to reinvigorate local government.

The mayoral system is familiar across the Atlantic and in many European countries. Every American city has its elected mayor, with specific powers and responsibilities which do not require the endorsement of elected councillors. The same is true in France, where mayors have real powers that can turn them into national figures. Alain Juppé, the French Prime Minister, remains mayor of Bordeaux. Jacques Chirac gave up being mayor of Paris only when he was elected President.

This new system, though foreign to Britain, offers a potential cure for the moribund nature of local government. At last voters, who rarely know even the

names of their councillors, would be able to identify a single individual – a Mr London or Ms Sheffield – as responsible for the quality and cost of services. Such mayors would enjoy a serious mandate and their presence would make councils more transparent and accessible. A mayor would also have the authority to resist the intrusive tendencies of central government.

In theory at least, this system could allow a candidate to circumvent, Ross Perot-style, the tyranny of British political parties which have such a stranglehold over councils. This is born out by a recent poll indicating that Richard Branson, rather than a party figure, would be the people's favourite for mayor of London (followed, incidentally, by Ken Livingstone). Opening up politics in this way would be progressive: when élites are able to run a closed shop, they inevitably become complacent and degenerate. In Britain, the professionalisation of politics has produced a breed of leaders at local and national level who often seem out of touch. The decline of parties has progressively reduced the pool of available talent from which our political leaders can be chosen.

It is worth remembering, however, that mayoral systems are open to corruption and one-party rule. There are plenty of examples of machines controlling American cities: the Daley family has turned Chicago into a fiefdom. And Marion Barry, the mayor of Washington who was jailed on drugs charges and then re-elected, is no advertisement for the probity of the office.

In short, it would be naïve to conclude that introducing city mayors would alone prevent the monopolisation of power by some of the incompetents that have run a number of councils in recent years. But the Heseltine-Blair idea could offer a route to a more accountable system that would put voters back in the driving seat of local government.

Nuclear policy goes up in smoke

Greenpeace has been deprived of a little protest action. Sizewell C and Hinkley C, two new nuclear power stations that the Government had been planning, will not now be built. After a long feasibility study, they are no longer considered financially viable.

The truth is that neither the Government nor the private sector is willing to spend billions of pounds building new power stations when they are unlikely to make profits for at least 10 years.

Both the public and private sectors have one good reason for closing their wallets. It is quite possible that the Sizewell and Hinkley plants would never make enough profit to justify the initial investment. Alternative forms of power – such as gas – may be much cheaper for decades to come. Indeed, few people predicted how low gas prices have turned out to be in the Nineties, or how plentiful gas supplies have become.

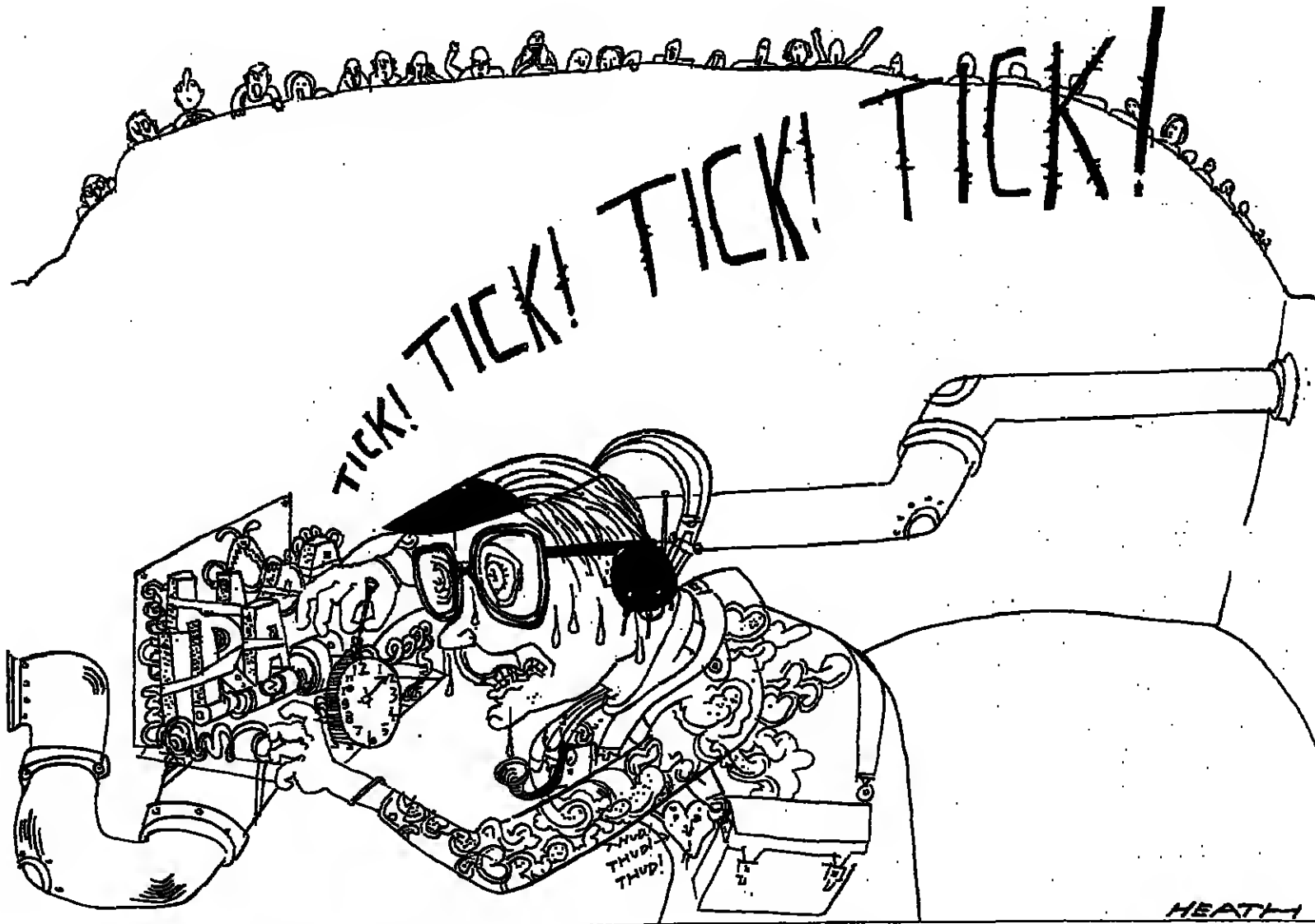
However, there are strong reasons to believe that new nuclear power stations will in time prove to be an essential and ultimately profitable venture. The dash for gas may make economic sense right now, but if we don't maintain alternative forms of power Britain could eventually become extremely dependent on the gas sheikhs of the next century. When the North Sea gas reserves are depleted, those who control the Trans-Siberian pipeline may wield considerable power

over the price we have to pay for gas.

Meanwhile, if the world is serious about tackling global warming, it must reduce carbon dioxide emissions. So alternatives to gas-fired power stations will be needed all over the world. Nuclear generation is therefore likely to be vital in the 21st century. New nuclear power stations will have to be built in Britain. And when nuclear power plants are planned for countries such as China, British industry will have a better chance of picking up the contracts if we have recent experience of building our own modern versions.

The abandonment of the Sizewell and Hinkley Cs really amounts to short-termism. From the City's point of view, these nuclear power stations are not a good investment. After all, private investors are used to picking up the profits within five years at relatively low risk.

Sadly, the Government has failed to inject a long-term perspective either, despite the fact that the investment is in the national interest. It will provide neither direct investment nor incentives to encourage private-sector cash. Sizewell C and Hinkley C were making privatisation of the nuclear industry difficult. So they had to go. Tax cuts funded by privatisation proceeds are clearly a greater priority than protecting our supplies of energy. Giving up on Sizewell C and Hinkley C is a decision we may all live to regret.



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Charles and Diana: both committed to helping young people

From Mr E. H. Salmon

Sir: Your editorial "The Queen of Hearts turns up trumps" (7 December) claims that the Prince of Wales lacks the common touch, but shows an almost wilful disregard for the range of his charitable interests. The Prince's Trust, the Prince's Trust Volunteers, and the Prince's Youth Trust have the shared aim of helping young people who face disadvantages of many different kinds in our society.

The prince is the founder active president of these trusts, whose record is impressive and insufficiently acknowledged by the media. Whenever he is on his travels, he makes a point of spending time with young people, understanding their concerns and showing great interest in their achievements. This is very much appreciated by all who meet him.

Because of his position, the prince's public statements may have to be less forceful than Princess Diana's but there is no doubt that they are both committed to helping, in whatever

way they can, young people whose experience of problems such as homelessness, unemployment, and racial discrimination, give them little hope for the future.

Yours faithfully,
E. H. SALMON
London, SE22
11 December

From Miss A. M. S. Hutton-Wilson

Sir: While the backdoor methods of achieving the Princess of Wales's *Panorama* interview were regrettable, the programme left me with a feeling of hope. As your leading article indicated, we are indeed witnessing the emergence of a new-style monarchy, but it will need nurturing.

More credit should be given to Prince Charles whose courageous forays into personal expression on public matters paved the way for Princess Diana. If he sounds diffident and now "appears remote and isolated", it is largely because his efforts were met with scorn and derision in the press and pro-

vided an easy butt for satire.

He is, in fact, the bridge between old and new, deeply rooted in tradition, yet also espousing views ahead of their time. It is not surprising he envies the reception accorded to his wife. He really "cares" too.

The kind of monarchy embodied by the senior members of the Royal Family suited their time and served us well. The emphasis should now be on encouraging a healthy evolution, not division and rivalry.

Charles and Diana each offer a valuable contribution to society and the media should support them both as they explore new roles.

Yours etc,
A. M. S. HUTTON-WILSON
Evercreech, Somerset

From Ms Liz Lynne, MP

Sir: I think it is unwise for royalty to be appearing to support a political party by sharing a platform with one of its representatives (report of the Princess of Wales's speech to the housing

charity Centrepoint, 8 December). But it is strange that everyone thinks that the princess is supporting the Labour Party when, in fact, that party has no policy in restoring benefit rights to 16-18 year-olds, despite the absence of such benefit rights being a contributory factor in the cause of homelessness and insecurity among young people.

Yours sincerely,
LIZ LYNN
MP for Rochdale (Lib Dem)
House of Commons
London, SW1
11 December

The writer is Liberal Democrat Social Security and Disability spokesperson.

From Mrs Marjorie Crossley
Sir: I wonder if Princess Diana is hoping to revive "slumming", which was a popular occupation for idle wealthy young women in the Victorian era.

Yours sincerely,
MARJORIE CROSSLEY
Cambridge
8 December

Denial: abuse repeated

From Ms Marjorie Orr

Sir: Angela Lambert was given a good deal of inaccurate information on recovered memory of abuse. Many children of "False Memory Society" parents never forget, yet are still portrayed by their denying parents as victims of brainwashing therapists. Reputable studies show that forgotten sexual abuse is often recalled outside therapy, and can frequently be corroborated.

Entirely contrary to the claim of Roger Scofield, director of the British False Memory Society, that "86 per cent of confronted parents admit", child abusers are notorious and plausible liars even in the face of overwhelming evidence. Very far from being publicly seeking, the "False Memory Society" adult children have not had their stories told in a media that has given denying parents an almost free ride. Yours faithfully, MARJORIE ORR
Accuracy About Abuse
London, NW3
10 December

From Ms Angela Davies

Sir: Angela Lambert's account of parents accused of child abuse ("Guilty until proven innocent", 7 December) was ill thought-out. While denouncing the Books employee who contacted police in the Somerville case ("no doubt") well-meaning, her overall sympathy is with Ms Somerville, not with the employee who acted appropriately to the requirements of his job.

The link between the cases of Ms Somerville and her partner and the Skits was also rather tenuous. The latter are involved in an undoubtedly distressing case of abuse accusations by their daughter, who possibly suffers from the psychological disorder False Memory Syndrome. The former were investigated, never accused, after a third party acted on witnessing evidence of possible abuse – i.e. photographs of naked child.

Yes, we have had Cleveland, Rochdale and the Orkneys. But we also have many children who suffer in silence because no one wants to step in. It seems ironic that after the breakdown over the West case, someone who had the courage to take direct action can be vilified. It is far better that some innocent parents are embarrassed than any innocent child suffers the agonies of sexual or physical abuse. Yours faithfully, ANGELA DAVIES
London, SW16
8 December

A job for the FBI

From Mr Paul Bakker

Sir: Glad to hear that the Duchess of York will get her jewels back. Next summer we're visiting the US for the first time.

We find it very reassuring to know that if one of our bags goes missing after being checked in, the full resources of the FBI will be brought to bear in its recovery.

Yours,
PAUL BAKKER
Orton Wistow,
Cambridgeshire
6 December

Diet of untruths?

From Mr J. A. Shelley

Sir: As a linguist concerned with the influence of language on cultural behaviour, I have an observation regarding the genesis of the current BSE controversy.

It is widely acknowledged that the bovine form of this disease originated with the feeding to cattle of products composed largely of the remains of other animals. It is noteworthy that these potentially, and now actually, controversial feedstuffs were commonly marketed under such descriptive names as "meal", "nuts" and "cake", all terms which stress a lack of any relation to meat or animal products. It seems likely that the manufacturers of these feeds were at least aware of possible public disgust, if not potential risks, involved in feeding products containing processed

carcasses to animals biologically adapted to consume only vegetable matter.

Interested parties – and one might include political parties – are all too often tempted to abuse language for their own ends. Members of the public would do well to be aware of this when making vital judgements concerning their own health.

Yours faithfully,
J. A. SHELLEY
Cupar, Fife

From Professor J. C. Shaw

Sir: A thought for the Prime Minister, who said today that there is no scientific evidence that BSE and CJD are linked. Before gravity was demonstrated, there was no scientific evidence for its existence.

Yours faithfully,
J. C. SHAW
Hambleton, Lancashire
7 December

When students turn to Jesus

From Mr Hugh Griffiths

Sir: Fran Abrams ("Students come clean with change of image", 11 December) writes: "Today's Oxbridge students list Jesus Christ and their own parents as their greatest heroes, the Bible as their favourite book and going to church among their favourite leisure activities. And, if that were not bad enough..."

What is it about Christianity and Christian belief that you find so objectionable? Are people supposed to be antagonistic to Jesus and to loathe reading the Bible – and if they do like these things, does this make them somehow less than acceptable?

Some of the values that your paper espouses (which include among them respect for people and the provision of a caring society) are exactly what the Christian faith proclaims as the way we should live. It is a great shame that your news articles and editorial content are so often coloured by the view that relationships are only of concern to the individual and there is no impact on others resulting from the "liberal" use of sex and drugs in their lives.

Yours sincerely,
HUGH GRIFFITHS
New Malden, Surrey

Greer's premise

From Mr Douglas Rimmer

Sir: Germaine Greer ("Engr. Inn, do you take me for a fool?", 8 December) writes of being defrauded, she believes, of £20 by a Nigerian youth in London. I, too, have been implored to pay the fares to distant places of people claiming to be stranded in London. However, these supplicants were British, so far as I could judge.

Germaine Greer has also received from Nigeria a letter inviting her to join in a business transaction which, with good reason, she believes to be fraudulent. Although many people have received such letters from Nigeria, I have not. But, like

many others, I have been advised by British companies of winning prizes, as a condition of listening to sales promotions for time-share apartments, and these prizes have turned out to be worthless. And, like many others, I have been urged by British workmen to contract repairs to my house which I believe to be unnecessary.

What, then, are we to deduce from Germaine Greer's article – that, in order to denigrate a whole people on the strength of a small number of personal experiences, it is necessary to begin with a wish to denigrate that people?

Yours faithfully,
DOUGLAS RIMMER
Birmingham

Letters should be addressed to Letters to the Editor, The Independent, One Canada Square, Canary Wharf, London E14 5DL, and include a daytime telephone number. (Fax: 0171-293 2056; e-mail: letters@independent.co.uk) Letters may be edited for length and clarity. We regret that we are unable to acknowledge unpublished letters. Back issues of the Independent are available from Historic Newspapers, 0800 906609.

In sport, personalities take a running jump

See who won the British Sports Personality of the Year award, then? Frank Bruno, wasn't it?

No.
Oh. Who was it?
Jonathan Edwards.
Who's Jonathan Edwards?
British Sports Personality of the Year.

Good! And who was he before that?
He was plain old Jonathan Edwards.

And what sort of a personality does he have?

He has the sort of personality that makes you want to run down a track, then hop, skip and jump. Well, it makes him want to do it anyway.

And that's what he does?
That's what he does. Further than anyone else in the world.

Great. What else does he do?
Nothing else.

Well, nothing out of the ordinary. Eating, drinking, reading a few books. Sends Christmas cards, I expect.

And he's a great personality, is he?
Sure. He's British Sports Personality of the Year, after all.

What do you have to do to be a personality in sport?
You have to be the best at your sport.

Being best at the hop, skip and jump? They like to call it the triple jump.



MILES KINGTON

But it's really the hop, skip and jump?

Yes.
And nobody in Britain gave a damn about it before, because we weren't very good at it, and if you asked anyone who was the previous world record-holder they wouldn't know, would they?

No.
But now Jonathan Edwards is world champion we're very interested in the sport?

No. We are still totally uninterested in it. But we are interested in Jonathan Edwards now.

Because of his personality?

Are there any people in sport with interesting personalities?

Yes. They are called commentators. They have interesting personalities. Compared with many sportsmen.

Are there any sportsmen with interesting personalities?

Not until they retire. Magically.

many so-called sports personalities have no discernible personality at all, until they leave the sport and go on TV and radio, when they blossom.

Good heavens. Like who?
Ian Botham, Bill Beaumont, Henry Cooper, Gary Lineker, Alan Hansen...

Is Alan Hansen that regally good-looking man with the Scots swag on "Match of the Day"?

That's him.
Good heavens. Was he a footballer in a previous life?

Certainly was. The point is that all these guys developed personalities after they left the game. Having a personality while you're still in the game does nothing for you at all, except make you easier to imitate.

Pardon?
I was thinking of Chris Eubank, who cleverly manufactured his own personality while still in boxing, with monochrome and all, whereas Nigel Benn didn't.

You might say that Benn was the better boxer; on the other hand, if an impressionist did an impression of Nigel Benn, nobody knew who it was meant to be. So Chris wins on points.

Well, if personality has nothing to do with it, why is it called the British Sports Personality of the Year Award?

Because sport desperately wants to be part of showbiz and knows it can't be. All competitions that are gen-

uinely in the entertainment and personality world, like the comedy, pop and drama awards, don't have the word personality in the title. That's because the winners all have personality guaranteed. So why mention it?

You don't call Hugh Grant the Acting Personality of the Year. You don't give prizes for being Political Personality of the Year. You assume that the Parliamentarian of the Year already has a personality. In sport you can assume no such thing, so you build it into the title.

I see... Everyone thought that Frank Bruno was going to win, didn't they?

Does he have a personality?

Oh, yes. He's nice, he smiles a lot and he used to say "Harry" a lot.

Does that count as a personality?

So why didn't he win?

He already had a job in panto. He didn't need it.

Will Jonathan Edwards get a part in panto?

Sure. He's now playing Puss in Boots at Wimbledon. He wears the magic three-league boots. He comes on one side, jumps and clears the entire stage and vanishes the other side.

Is that true?

No, but who would be surprised if it were? That's what British sport is all about.

سكنا من الامل

Dreams broken on the streets of Paris

European History is happening, too slowly to notice. We become bogged down in acronyms, endless abstract debates about institutions, all the bureaucratic blather and hogwash of today's Europe. Our eyes glaze, our minds wander. Is this the birth of a new super-state or the death of a dream? Who knows? But concentrating on it is like trying to watch a butterfly hatch or water freeze.

Did other great turning-points in political destiny have the same anaesthetising effect on those who lived through them? Did newspaper readers in Rhode Island and Boston yawn as they flipped yet another wearisome report of the confederalists' latest proposals in Philadelphia? Did voters in Munich and East Prussia shrug at the windy garrulosity of the National Socialists in the Reichstag and make ancient jokes about the pointlessness of politicians?

Previous crises have at least been tinged by violence or the threat of violence. Dying soldiers and smashed glass tend to concentrate the least political of minds. This time, as we try to focus on yet another European summit, to recall what the "reflection group" is up to and whose proposals on QMV will dominate the agenda for the IGC, we have only had the Parisian riots to make us stop and think. This isn't

real, European-style violence. But at least the workers of France have snapped their fingers.

We need to hear them. For we are at a turning-point, even if the corner is gentle and long. After half a century of chugging quietly towards a certain idea of European unity, the realisation is spreading that we may not get there. Not soon. Not ever.

And the reason is straightforward – the power of the global economy. Up to now, there has been a vague equation in the minds of European voters between the notion of European union and prosperous modernity. The federal project unfolded alongside the creation of European welfare states, the regulation of labour markets and the transforming effect of post-war prosperity. During good times, voters don't much care what their leaders are scheming, so long as for them life ripens.

The arrival of freer world trade, entirely mobile capital and the Asian century kills this cosy equation. The lethal connection is monetary union, declared to be the next stage of European union. Once, perhaps, that could have been accomplished through a grand European-wide Keynesian institution, coupled with equally widespread welfarism. But these days monetary union has to be on the

For most Europeans, the federalist project has long been synonymous with progress. Now the implications of monetary union are forcing a radical rethink

orthodox bankers' terms. Nobody in power dissents from that proposition and, indeed, it is written in letters of fire into the Maastricht treaty.

Monetary union on these terms is incompatible with the continued levels of welfare, industrial subsidy and government borrowing to which a vast swathe of the European middle class is accustomed. The link between federalism and voter-gratification is broken for public-sector workers and pensioners, as it had already broken for farm workers.

Suddenly, the next stage of political union is rasing against the self-interest of millions of voters at the heart of Europe. Once the Community seemed synonymous with security and wealth. Now the federal destiny demands insecurity and cuts.

There is a grim belly-laugh to be wrung out of all this. Part of the motivation for European union, particularly in France, was that it would build a political Europe which could withstand the malign neo-liberal orthodoxy of malign



ANDREW MARR
Columnist of the Year

The federal destiny demands insecurity and cuts

Anglo-American capitalism. Yet here is the EU itself acting as the bridgehead for that orthodoxy. Have the barbarians entered the temple? No, worse still – the priests have converted to barbarism!

British Tories shouldn't laugh too hard, however. For the other side of the coin is that all the things which London has argued are vir-

tuous and more important than monetary union (cutting deficits, honestly facing up to demographic pressures on welfare budgets, and so on) are being driven forward on the Continent by the allegedly irrelevant Maastricht timetable.

What a mess. Reforms which the British took from Thatcher because she argued that they were good for Britain might have been accepted by the French on the grounds that they are good for France. They are far harder to sell on behalf of an abstraction like the Maastricht process. And if this is how France reacts, what is coming elsewhere? The architects of union may live to rue the day that they linked monetary orthodoxy so tightly to cross-border fraternity.

Keynes famously said: "When the facts change, I change my mind. What do you do?" Prudence would hold an early summit to revise the Maastricht treaty and put the timetable for monetary union into abeyance. The single currency would be declared something that would be delivered when there was pressure on the politicians from

their voters rather than the other way round.

Prudence would do this – but the French, German and other key governments are most unlikely to countenance such an embarrassing U-turn. They are politicians of the will, not of opinion polls. So at Madrid they will turn, instead, to the enormous question of what to call the new currency. Enjoy, boys.

If it happens according to the timetable (and I believe it won't), monetary union is likely further to alienate continental voters from their rulers and to drive a wedge between the inner core who go ahead and the rest. As French voters took the strain, the consequences would surely include a surge of support for Le Pen's National Front and the other anti-Maastricht politicians of left and right. What would that do for Franco-German relations?

Meanwhile, this troubled core Europe would face competitive devaluation from the nations encircling it, leading to worsening political relations between the two groups. Would it lead, in the end, to the barriers going back up? Though Sir James Goldsmith's polemics on the need for European protectionism have cut little ice in London, they may start to seem compelling to continental politicians struggling to retain

their post-war social contracts.

And, in case there be the faintest whiff of British self-congratulation detectable here, let us remember that these are not nightmares from which London can blandly request an opt-out. Today British Conservatism celebrates the effects of devaluation and freedom from European social legislation, coupled with all the benefits of European free trade and the inward investment that full membership of the EU brings. And that isn't sustainable.

What is lacking is any alternative model to the implacable federalism of the post-war dream, or the smugly rejectionist politics of Britain. For me, the answer is a confederal Europe, in which a smaller but powerful central authority oversees trade, basic human rights, environmental and some security issues, while everything else was reserved as "nation-states' rights" – a Europe that was a place in which to live and trade, not a new country.

That kind of union may happen, though conversation about it has barely started. Before it does, we are likely to go through a time of political crisis in which the old order is threatened, challenged and messily dislodged. And perhaps this crisis has already begun: when European History speeds up, it tends to start on the streets of Paris.

How to revive top-quality democracy

Tony Blair is worried that people are going off politics in a big way. Hence the new ideas he revealed to Donald Macintyre

For an Opposition leader enjoying a 25-point poll lead, Tony Blair is remarkably focused on the proposition that there is "still a lot to do" before an election that could yet be 16 months away. In Club Class at 35,000 feet, en route to a snow-bound Vienna to lend to the Austrian Chancellor's election campaign a little lustre, Mr Blair is visibly tense about the tasks ahead for his party.

While he mocks the Tory high command for the apparent

Labour will need to guard against cynicism among the electors

"sense of decay, a *fin de siècle* air" that he claims hangs over the Government, he is also keenly aware that in this strange period of electoral phoney war Labour could have problems maintaining its own momentum. And here his own legendary lack of complacency comes to the rescue: new Labour has to "deepen its message". While he says, correctly, that some among the "chattering classes" may be bored with the "new Labour, new Britain" theme, the public at large is "still coming to terms with it, still getting used to it". And he suggests that in the coming months Labour will need to guard with equal vigour against cynicism among the electors and complacency within the party.

Though he doesn't say so, you can detect a hint of frustration that he has not been given the credit by UK commentators that he already gets abroad for shaping what he sees as a new, coherent, three-sided ideology for Labour. When you point out that the similarly clear ideological map Margaret Thatcher drew for herself in opposition between 1975 and 1979 was coloured in by some eye-catching policies such as the sale of council houses, he says, almost impatiently, that yes, there will be more headline-making policies, but that should not detract from the clarity of his overall mission. He recaps on the three-sided approach. First, in the economic sphere, it is about "equipping people and business for massive... technological change", which he distin-



Tony Blair: 'I'm very worried about the calibre of people going into politics at every level'

Photograph: Brian Harris

guishes from both the "rampant *laissez-faire*" doctrines of the new right and the "centralised economic planning" of the old left. Second, there is a "one nation" approach to social cohesion, based on reform of the welfare state, "rebuilding strong public services" and confronting the problem of "an underclass set apart from the rest of society". He again makes the distinction: this is neither new right "indifference to social breakdown" nor the old left's limitless expansion of public spending and rights without responsibilities.

And the third element is a

"new politics" to bring government "closer to the people", which contrasts with the right's hostility to constitutional change and the old left's addiction to all-powerful central government.

It is about the third of these – how to change the very nature of British party politics – that Mr Blair is keenest to talk today. But just how solid are his credentials here? After all, the Commons is still a bear-garden, and Labour-LibDem co-operation is in one of its grumpy sluggish phases – not least because the Labour leader himself has resolutely refused to shift from his position that he is

"not persuaded of the case" for Commons electoral reform. Indeed, it is like stripping paint with your bare fingernails to get the Labour leader to expand on how he would handle the commitment inherited from John Smith to hold a referendum on proportional representation. Mr Blair clearly believes that since there is such a large constitutional agenda on which Labour's goals are shared with the Liberal Democrats, the "understandable" importance Paddy Ashdown's party attaches to PR should not be allowed to become a barrier. But he does give the faintest hint of how he

might proceed on a PR referendum. And it stems from the formula he has now adopted on the matter of a referendum on monetary union. Were an ECU referendum to take place under a Labour government, Mr Blair maintains, he would not allow any breach of collective Cabinet responsibility, no repeat of 1975, when Harold Wilson permitted Cabinet ministers to campaign according to their own views on European membership.

What, then, about a PR referendum? "It could be argued that PR is a slightly different case because there has been an ongoing debate in the party

and many positions have been taken."

And as Prime Minister he himself would take a view when the time came. Ever cautious, he stressed the party was nowhere near a decision on this; but it just might mean that Mr Blair would allow Robin Cook and other Cabinet colleagues who supported PR to campaign for it, even he personally was against it.

Nevertheless, this still leaves the question of what's new on

Directly elected mayors could inject life into local government

the political reform flank, over and above the admittedly daunting programme of constitutional change that Mr Blair inherited from his predecessors? Well, two issues certainly are, key proposals in the areas of local government and the workings of Parliament itself.

At the centre of his thinking on the Commons is a genuinely radical transformation of Prime Minister's Question Time from its twice weekly, 15-minute role of purveyor of ready-made confrontational soundbites to the TV networks, into a cooler, longer (half-hour), once-weekly session that actually adds to the sum of political knowledge.

Some questions, or general subject areas, would be notified in advance to encourage more informative replies, but MPs, including the Opposition leader, would retain the opportunity to ask impromptu searching questions on topics of the day. "There needs to be an acceptance that questions should genuinely hold ministers to account and elicit information."

He points out that at present most of the questions put to government ministers by their own side, especially at Prime Minister's Question Time, are actually about the Opposition. "It's not that you are not going to be able to ask hard questions but there is all the difference between hard questioning and personally abusive exchanges," he says.

In other words a changed system won't necessarily give a Prime Minister an easier ride; rather, a more publicly edifying one. In this respect Mr Blair is going much further than the Commons Select Committee

on Procedure's current proposals for reform of Question Time. So what about local councils? He is passionate when he says he is a "big believer" in the revival of local government, "which at its best is highly effective and highly imaginative."

The stripping of councils' responsibilities have "tragically" put many people off even considering becoming councillors. But Mr Blair is clearly warming to a proposal that, he believes, could inject real life into local government though it may annoy many councillors. This is the notion of directly elected mayors. It is, he says, referring explicitly to President Chirac's background as Mayor of Paris and the importance of big city mayors in the United States. "essential that you have people of high calibre in all parts of the political firmament."

And this is very much part of Mr Blair's pitch: "I'm very worried about the calibre of people going into every level of politics. It's not surprising people go off politics. A large majority of people, Labour and Tory, come into politics for good and decent motives. But the process is harming the

way that politics develops."

This emphasis on political change is very much of a piece with what Mr Blair increasingly argues differentiates him from one-nation Tories, as well as those on the new right. Although there may be some overlap in ideas, Labour, he maintains, has given the political centre a "new ideology", and stands for transformation and renewal; while one-nation Conservatives – however commendably – are about conserving, in all spheres from the welfare state to the political process.

Each Sunday evening, virtually the whole Labour Party is tuning into the *Wilderness Years*, BBC TV's series on the party's long march back to electability. Mr Blair believes this series will, for most party members, help to validate the changes made under his leadership. But he is characteristically wary of what he thinks may be the conclusion to the series: "If the final thesis is, as I expect it will be, that we've betrayed everything for power, that's intellectually very sloppy." And as he flew back from Vienna last night, he seemed supremely confident of proving it wrong.

ANOTHER VIEW Simon Mayo

The blasphemy is to settle for a Nativity that has lost its meaning

Here is a story that many people have found blasphemous: a strange otherworldly creature visits a woman called Mary to tell her she is going to have God's baby and he will save the world.

Two millennia later, many people don't find this story blasphemous, they just find it dull. For many people the original story of Christmas has been told and retold so many times that its meaning has been completely obscured. A new meaning has been found – cards, television, alcohol, food and Santa.

A radio programme that I am presenting for Christmas Eve on Radio One has been attacked by members of both the Church of England and the Roman Catholic Church as "offensive" and "disgusting". Notwithstanding, the small fact that these outraged critics had only been reading draft samples of a leaked script, they were decided: the programme had to be stopped.

In fact, the "cartoon nativity" – as the 18-minute drama we are producing has been dubbed – is not quite as reported. True, Joseph – or Joey, as Mary calls him – is a bad carpenter, the angel Gabriel is a camp New Yorker, and the Innkeeper has got a problem with Mad Cow Disease. But in our version – whatever her reactions to these momentous events at the time – Mary does not swear at Joseph and is not "demeaned". She is portrayed as an ordinary human being with an unusually momentous calling, but then most theologians would concur with that.

Whenever the Nativity story has been taken from one medium into another, especially when it is laced with humour, the religious establishment has declared a state of emergency. As long ago as the late Middle

Ages, with the Wakefield and York Mystery plays, humour has played an essential part in making the old story new.

While I have my doubts that God needs bodyguards, least of all in the form of blasphemy laws in a pluralistic, religiously diverse society like ours, it seems to me that the real blasphemy is to settle for a Christmas story that has lost all power to fire the imagination as it once did.

At about the same time as our programme goes out to listeners of Radio One, the Christmas story will also be told on Radio Two with carols by

candlelight from York Minster; on Radio Three by Monteverdi's Vespers of 1610; on Radio Four with Midnight Mass from Bridlington Priory, on Classic FM with Carols from Greyfriars Church, Oxford and on BBC1 with a *Songs of Praise* special – "Christmas with Cliff".

Good for all those audiences. All we're trying to do is tell the same story to a different audience. It may be the greatest story ever told, but there's more than one way of telling a story.

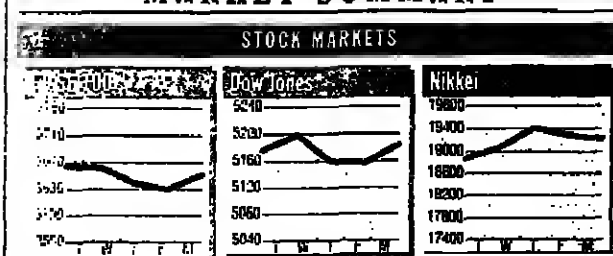
The writer presents Radio One's morning show.

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FTSE 350	1807.90	+9.00	+0.5	1821.50	931.00	3.87
FT Small Cap	1937.97	-0.87	-0.0	1993.11	1678.61	3.33
FT All Share	1781.53	+8.15	+0.5	1837.78	1489.23	3.83
New York	5183.95	+27.10	+0.5	5185.76	3632.08	2.27
Tokyo	18226.78	-60.19	-0.3	19684.04	14485.41	0.781
Hong Kong	9335.17	-28.44	-0.3	10032.93	8967.93	3.881
Frankfurt	2272.92	+5.32	+0.2	2317.01	1910.98	1.981
Paris	1849.59	-6.74	-0.4	2017.27	1721.80	3.201
Milan	9023.00	+66.00	+0.7	9911.00	8757.00	1.771

* One Year Index & Graph at 1300 hours FTSE/STP World Index Table

MAIN PRICE CHANGES

Rises	Falls
Inchcape 223 16.5 8.0	Trafalgar House 27 2.5 8.5
Airtours 358 22 6.5	Caltech Group 531 20 3.6
Laporte 859 29 4.8	British Steel 161.5 5.5 3.3
London Elec 698 29.8 4.5	Caradon 178 6 3.2
Fidlands Elec 729 28.4 4.1	Smith (US) Holdings 260 7 2.8

INTEREST RATES

Rate	1 Month	3 Months	6 Months	1 Year	2 Year	3 Year	5 Year
UK	6.56	6.31	7.45	7.86	7.82	7.92	7.92
US	5.56	5.47	5.72	6.51	6.05	6.50	6.50
Japan	0.51	0.56	1.23	4.58	4.58	4.58	4.58
Germany	4.19	3.75	6.10	7.45	6.87	6.87	6.87

CURRENCIES

Unit	1 Pound	1 Dollar	1 DM	1 Yen
£/\$	1.5337	0.636	1.564	0.639
£/DM	1.5350	0.356	1.5648	0.639
£/Yen	154.934	0.334	2.4597	1.4442
DM/\$	154.934	0.334	2.4597	1.4442
Yen/\$	154.934	0.334	2.4597	1.4442

OTHER INDICATORS

Indicator	Value	Change	Unit
Oil Brent	17.93	+0.07	18.28
Gold \$	369.50	-0.2	377.5
Gold £	253.90	-1.16	242.252

IN BRIEF

Barings urged to re-think Tuckey role
Pressure was mounting yesterday on Barings and its Dutch owner, ING, to reconsider its controversial consultancy agreement with Andrew Tuckey, the former deputy chairman. Several of the bank's clients are believed to have expressed concern at the negative publicity surrounding the continued relationship with Mr Tuckey and his expected remuneration. Internal staff divisions were also coming to a head yesterday over Mr Tuckey's uncertain status at Barings. He is the only one of the 23 disgraced former executives, all under investigation by the Securities and Futures Authority, who is still actively engaged in Barings' business, with an office on the bank's executive floor.

New warranty deal for car buyers
Motorists will soon be able to buy warranties against mechanical breakdown for cars bought privately, thanks to a scheme to be launched this week by members of the Institute of Insurance Brokers. Until now warranties have only been available on new and used cars bought from dealers. More than 3 million cars are bought privately or at auction each year.

Hogg takes Allied Domecq chair
Sir Christopher Hogg was yesterday confirmed as new chairman of Allied Domecq, the drinks group. Currently deputy chairman, he will take over from Michael Jackson on 1 April. Sir Christopher recently announced he was standing down as chairman of Courtland, but remains chairman of Reuters and a non-executive director of SmithKline Beecham and the Bank of England.

Accountant jailed
John Dennison, a former senior partner in Surrey-based accountants Geo H Jackson & Co, has been jailed for two and a half years at Croydon Crown Court after admitting six charges of unauthorised deposit-taking totalling £8m.

Pipeline chief joins British Gas board
Harry Moulson who runs British Gas's pipeline business, Transco, has been appointed to the main board. Mr Moulson, who has recently been in dispute with the regulator, Clare Spottiswood, over how much he can charge others to use the pipes, sees his salary increase to £260,000 from an undisclosed sum.

Mercury plans buy-back
Mercury Asset Management, the fund manager, announced yesterday that it is to buy back up to 15 per cent of shares in its European privatisation trust. The buy-back involves the issue of £5m in preference shares to finance the deal which is aimed at narrowing the discount between the price of shares in the fund and their net asset value. Comment, page 21

\$250m restructuring at US drugs group
Bristol-Myers Squibb, the US drug group, said it would take a fourth-quarter restructuring charge of between \$250m and \$300m in an effort to further reduce costs. The company said productivity initiatives are expected to save at least \$1.1bn by 1998.

Salomon cuts staff bonuses
Salomon Brothers, the US investment bank, has cut staff bonuses despite improved 1995 results. Pre-tax profits were \$497m for the first nine months, after a near-\$1bn loss in 1994.

Dyke heads for top job in Pearson shake-up

NIGEL COPE

Pearson, the media conglomerate that owns the *Financial Times*, is expected to announce a radical boardroom shake-up tomorrow which could be a prelude to making TV mogul Greg Dyke its new chief executive.

The first part of the sweeping changes will be the replacement of finance director James Joll with John Makinson, managing director of the *Financial Times*. Analysts are meeting the company for an update on trading tomorrow and are expecting to be given details.

Mr Dyke, the head of the group since 1991, is 47. He is seen as a good manager who has strong operational experience.



James Joll: Making way for FT's Makinson

His TV background would also count in his favour as this is a growth area for the company, which has been transforming itself from a diversified conglomerate - including everything from engineering interests to Royal Doulton china - to a more focused media group.

It was considered a surprise that Mr Dyke was not given a boardroom role but placed in charge of one of the operating divisions.

The path to the top job would need the retirement of Frank Barlow, the group's current chief executive who was 65 last March.

A spokesman for Pearson refused to comment last night. However, privately it is believed they will announce the changes at the *Financial Times*. But confirmation of changes at the top will come later.

Pearson has recently been the subject of takeover speculation which has taken shares this year from a low of 543p to a peak of 684p. They were up 6p at 660p last night. In August Pearson announced profits had fallen 27 per cent in the half-year to last June.

Mr Makinson is a former journalist on the influential *Lex* column on the FT. He has been the paper's managing director since last year. Mr Joll, 59, has been finance director for 10 years. He has also worked his way up from the *Lex* column where he was joint editor.

The changes will help calm investor concerns about the succession which have been hanging over the group for the last 18 months. One analyst said: "The board isn't getting any younger and the issue has to be addressed. It has hung like a spectre over the company."

Mr Barlow's retirement has been expected but Pearson has been dragging its feet about naming his successor.

Some analysts say, however, that Mr Dyke's experience is too narrow for a large group that still owns theme parks such as Alton Towers and other leisure operations such as Madame Tussauds. They say that an external appointment would be more appropriate.

Media analysts will be briefed collectively tomorrow after the company changed its policy of meeting media watchers individually as it gave some access to price-sensitive information before others. The company is also likely to issue a trading statement.

The appointment of Mr Dyke, who is a hands-on manager, is already seen to have shaken up the rather clubby Pearson. In March it pulled off its biggest TV deal when it paid £175m for Grundy Worldwide, the Australian production company that produces the *Neighbours* soap opera.

The deal was the work of Mr Dyke who only joined the company at the beginning of the year. In addition to the expansion in television, Pearson has been moving more into new media areas such as electronic publishing.

The group has been overhauling its regional newspaper group Westminster Press and cut 450 jobs there in July.

Trading move: Liffe takes space in the Stock Exchange tower



Full cry: Traders in action on the floor of the futures exchange, where open outcry still prevails. Photograph: Reuters

A new lease of life for outcry

JOHN EISENHAMMER
Financial Editor

Open outcry could return to the London Stock Exchange's old trading floor, which has been leased by Liffe, the futures exchange. In one of the largest City lettings in recent months, Liffe has taken 75,000 sq ft in the Stock Exchange tower, including office and storage space and the old trading floor.

Liffe, which operates by open outcry and has seen its business expand dramatically in recent years, said it needed the Stock Exchange floor as a contingency reserve. "We have to be able to continue trading at all

times. If anything happened, such as a fire, we could not rely on our automated system, but would need to carry on open outcry in another space," a Liffe spokeswoman said.

The Stock Exchange ended open outcry on its own floor when it moved to electronic dealing at Big Bang. Open outcry trading carried on with the options market until it merged with Liffe in 1992.

The trading floor at the Stock Exchange is still occupied by technicians finalising arrangements for the completion next year of the Sequence trading system.

Michael Lawrence, chief ex-

ecutive of the exchange, said: "Our space needs will be changing during 1996, following completion of the systems development projects on which we have been engaged. Letting these areas is part of the sound management of the exchange's assets."

The exchange is also expected to cut about 300 jobs out of its total staff of 1,300 as a result of replacement next summer of its traditional Telford settlements system by the new Crest paperless technology.

Liffe expects to take occupation in the second half of next year, and the leases run until 2004. Liffe's principal trading

will remain based at its Cannon Street headquarters. But the recent expansion of the trading facilities to meet demand has pushed out office space, which the exchange wants to relocate to the Stock Exchange tower.

Volumes on Liffe have grown since its start-up in 1982 at an annual rate of 50 per cent until this year which has seen a 12 per cent drop, which the market explained by less volatility in bond markets, and a reaction to the Barings crisis and other derivative concerns. But Liffe has recently announced links with the Tokyo and Chicago futures exchange which will bring new contracts to the floor.

Airtours faces further slump

JOHN SHEPHERD

Airtours yesterday revealed the full extent of the damage it suffered this summer, when holidays had to be sold at less than cost in an attempt to persuade people to go away despite the unusually hot weather at home. Profits before tax for the year to 30 September plunged from £75.8m to £59m.

Airtours now faces a critical three months as the post-Christmas booking period nears. It has cut capacity for next summer by 14 per cent to 1.8 million. Bookings to date, however, are very slow and are running at 25 per cent less than the same time last year.

Tour companies are suffering from the lack of a feelgood factor. Job insecurity and the lacklustre Budget, which put little extra cash into people's pockets, have kept the market depressed.

Hundreds of jobs have been cut this year across the industry, and analysts predict that hundreds of small tour operators and travel agents will go out of business.

The smaller operators have found it increasingly difficult to pass on the rises in hotel charges in Spain and Greece in the last two years. While there are signs that Greek hoteliers are prepared to cut charges to win back lost custom, prices in

Spain are rising again. The continued strength of the French franc is also deterring holidaymakers from venturing to the UK's most easily reached foreign destination.

David Crossland, chairman of Airtours, said prospects for 1995/96 depended on the willingness of UK tour operators to ensure that capacity was held in line with demand.

Besides the summer's hot weather, the industry paid the price for the policy over the last two years of chasing market share by slashing prices. Profit per customer at Airtours this summer crashed from £19.85p to £9.37p. Brochure prices for next summer have been increased by

around 7 per cent, but customers can still book a holiday for next summer for the cost in real terms of package tour taken in 1993.

Mr Crossland warned that the industry had to aim to balance demand with supply to rebuild profit margins. "We are not stupid enough to carry on operating it wrong," he added.

One of the main problems facing the industry is the high number of people who leave it until the last minute to book. Airtours is increasing its total dividend for the year by 16.7 per cent to 14p, through a final payment of 11p. Earnings per share were 34.7p, down from 49.2p. Investment Column, page 22

Grid directors net £2m in flotation

MARY FAGAN
Industrial Correspondent

Directors of the National Grid Company saw the value of their shares and share options reach £2m yesterday after the flotation of the Grid went ahead. The shares opened at 209p and closed at 209.5p, valuing the company at about £3.5bn.

The main beneficiaries include David Jefferies, the chairman, whose shares alone are worth about £780,000, and John Utley, the finance director. Directors also benefit from one-off dividend payments related to the flotation, although Mr Utley has said he will give about £50,000 to charity.

The price of the shares disappointed some City analysts who had expected it to reach as much as £2.20. At one point last week shares in the grey market touched £2.30.

The price may have been hit

by the decision by North West Water and Scottish Power to begin "book-building" demand from institutions for their Grid stakes with a view to placing the shares. The two companies have more than 10 per cent between them following their respective takeovers of Norweb and Manweb, the regional electricity firms.

Substantial stakes are still held by Hanson, through its acquisition of Eastern Electricity, and by Southern Electric International of the US, which bought South Western Electricity.

Both Hanson and SEI wanted to retain a Grid stake but were given a year to dispose of the shares by Tim Eggar, minister for industry and energy.

More than a million private shareholders receive shares in the Grid through the demerger of stakes by regional firms. Shares placed, page 23

CNN success spurs rivals into action

DAVID USBORNE
NEW YORK

For years it was derided by the broadcast establishment as the "Chicken Noodle Network." But today, CNN, the 24-hour news network launched by Ted Turner in 1980, is the model everybody is striving to imitate, not to mock.

With the start of December has come a rush of pronouncements of plans to challenge CNN in around-the-clock news. Rupert Murdoch, whose News Corporation owns the Fox Network here, started it with an almost off-hand comment at a conference in Boston that he intended launching his own cable news service, which, he said, would have a more conservative outlook than CNN.

Next to break cover was ABC, which proclaimed at a New York press conference that it, too, wanted to take on

the CNN franchise and its service would be launched in 1997. Then came NBC, which said it had sketched plans for a cable news operation in January.

The NBC proposal has since been tied to the Microsoft Corporation. NBC, a subsidiary of General Electric, has acknowledged it is in talks with Microsoft about possible collaboration. It is widely believed Microsoft is considering becoming a 50-per cent partner in NBC's 24-hour news service, which it would make available to personal computer users by way of new cable modem technology due next year.

How many CNN clones could compete and survive is an open question.

"Everyone knows there is room for more than one CNN, but nobody knows how many more," said Peter Herford, a professor of journalism at Columbia University in New York.

Agnelli to step down at Fiat

ANDREW GUMBEL
Rome

Gianni Agnelli, one of the towering personalities of the post-war Italian business world, heralded the end of an era yesterday by officially announcing that he would step down as chairman of Fiat in the next few months as part of a slow transition of power.

Mr Agnelli, who is 74 and in indifferent health, said during a traditional end-of-year meeting with managers that he would hand over the reins to his long-standing number two, Fiat's general manager Cesare Romiti. However he made clear that this would only be a trans-

sitional solution and that he intended younger blood to rise to the top of the organisation within a few years.

It has been known for some time that Mr Agnelli, who is viewed in Italy as a near-monarchical figure, intended to step aside sometime in 1996, but the mechanics of the succession have been surrounded by mystery and intense speculation.

In typically cautious fashion, Mr Agnelli will not be making an abrupt departure, but will remain chairman of the family holding company IFI and chief negotiator with the unions. Part of his continuing interest is expected to be grooming his nephew, Giovanni Alberto, for

the top job and thus keeping Fiat in the hands of the family that founded the company almost exactly a century ago.

The choice of Mr Romiti, who is 72, as even a transitional figurehead is bound to be controversial, since he is mistrusted within the family and under judicial scrutiny for his alleged role in making illegal payments to Italian political parties. A public prosecutor formally applied for him to stand trial just four days ago.

But his helmanship will give the 31-year-old Giovanni Alberto time to mature, both within the Fiat organisation where he is already on the board, and outside it.



Agnelli: handing over the reins at Fiat

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Nuclear generators admit the game is up at last

COMMENT

If British Energy had continued to pretend such a project was still on the cards it would have been dismissed as just plain batty

After nearly half a century of dogmatic attachment to the idea of building uneconomic generating plant with taxpayers' money, the nuclear industry's leaders finally gave in yesterday and announced the game was up. An application to build another station at Sizewell in Suffolk has been withdrawn, and an existing permission for Hinkley in Somerset will not be acted upon.

For most observers of the generating industry, the only surprise is that British Energy has persisted so long with its claim that another nuclear power station is a feasible economic proposition – even to the point of brushing aside the Government's nuclear review in the summer, which made clear that not a single dollop of state aid would be available.

In fact a new nuclear power station would need a gigantic subsidy. Every potential institutional investor in the privatisation of British Energy was aware of this, even if the management continued to delude itself. The company is wise to back off now, well ahead of the flotation pencilled in for next summer. If it had continued to pretend such a project was still on the cards it would have been dismissed as just plain batty, hardly a recipe for successful flotation.

Acknowledging the mortality of Britain's nuclear power industry creates its own problems, however, for no one likes a company without a long-term future. Bob Hawley, chief executive, plays down diversification into gas or other forms of generation,

because of overcapacity. He hinted that buying a regional electricity company might be on his agenda, but it is hard to see how.

The Government would not let him bid before privatisation, by which time there may be no reefs left. Furthermore, Tim Eggar, the industry and energy minister, is determined to prevent a repeat of the easy profits after the last electricity privatisation, and will almost certainly load British Energy with enough debt to prevent a buying spree after the flotation.

Even if he did not, any suggestion of grand plans for diversification would probably have investors running a mile. The alternatives, of selling existing technology overseas and joining the burgeoning worldwide industry that decommissions old power stations, are not the most exciting investment proposition around. Lord Hanson prides himself on his ability to make profits by managing declining industries, whether they be sack manufacture or tobacco. Perhaps it is time for him to take a close look at nuclear power. Floating the company at a realistic price continues to look as difficult as ever.

Question mark over our monetary set-up

The betting must still be on an interest rate cut after tomorrow's monetary meeting between Kenneth Clarke and Eddie George, notwithstanding the Governor's supposed opposition. After all, the Government runs no

immediate risks with inflation, which remains historically very low, and having called the economy right earlier this year, the Chancellor's tail is up.

The big drawback, however, is that such a move will undoubtedly put a question mark over our monetary arrangements. These were set up after the pound plummeted out of the European exchange rate mechanism, to make sure that there was an alternative framework for keeping inflation under control. At their core are the monthly meetings at which the Chancellor and Governor of the Bank of England discuss a broad range of economic indicators which contain signals about inflation prospects.

Both the Bank and the Treasury predict that underlying inflation will be around 2.5 per cent by mid-1997. Many outside economists would agree with Mr Clarke that this in itself is reason enough to allow interest rate cuts now. Unfortunately, the indicators the Chancellor and Governor are supposed to use to assess the inflation outlook are not yet flashing the green light for lower base rates Mr Clarke would like. Monetary and financial indicators such as narrow and broad money, the exchange rate, share prices and market expectations of inflation all point the other way. Cost indicators are mixed – materials costs are easing, but wage pressures are increasing. Indicators of activity such as output, retail sales and the state of the labour market are the only ones to signal the need for easier policy.

The judgement Mr Clarke needs to make tomorrow is not easy, because it will not be possible to judge whether policy has been about right until we see the inflation rate in two years' time. That, however, is precisely why he and Mr George look at a long list of indicators that hold signals about the success of the policy. It is also too early to abandon the rules. And if Eddie George is more acutely aware of this than Kenneth Clarke, it is because he is more likely to be here to see the consequences than the present Chancellor.

Elegant solution to an embarrassing problem

Shame rather than invention appears to have mothered the latest financial wheeze from Mercury Asset Management. Far from enjoying stonking gains, the 70,000 private investors who poured money into MAM's European privatisation investment trust have found themselves languishing in poorly performing markets. Launched at the top of the market early last year, the trust paid the price of collapsing confidence, and the fact that European privatisations have tended not to be priced at the giveaway levels common in the UK. Try as it might to argue that its trust had performed well against the index, the near 19 per cent discount to net asset value told a more dismal story of disappointment. For the sake of its brand im-

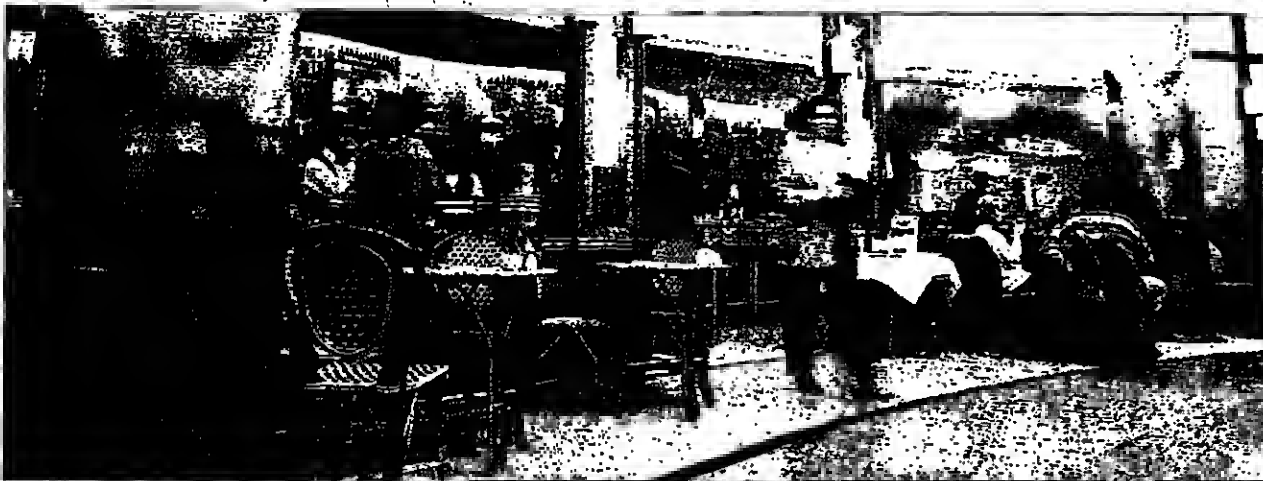
age, Mercury clearly felt such continued embarrassment was more than it could afford.

The remedy it has come up with looks clever: a share buy-back that is a first of its kind. MAM will take out about 15 per cent, or £88m, of the trust's share capital over the next year or so, which should both narrow the discount and improve the asset value per share for investors. The key to the technique is the replacement of the trust shares with an equivalent amount of preference shares, which will be privately placed with institutions. Although equity in name, these preference shares are to all intents and purposes debt.

This means Mercury gets round the company restrictions on share buy-backs, which must be financed out of distributable profits or the proceeds of another share issue, while at the same time maintaining the size of the trust and therefore its portfolio intact. Instead of decreasing the volume, it has found a way of changing the balance sheet structure, which means there will be no loss in management fees either.

But do not expect a rash of imitation. This sort of move only works with trusts that are below their issue price. Otherwise there are horrific tax complications. So old established trusts need not apply. The trust also needs to be of a decent size to absorb the costs and to make the preference shares worthwhile. Investors will pay some £4m a year to finance the exercise, which, looks a small price for a seemingly elegant solution to an old and embarrassing problem.

Belle époque: Last summer's heatwave boosted nation-wide expansion for restaurant group specialising in pavement catering at affordable prices



Café society: Pelican at Canary Wharf in London's Docklands offers a fresco dining

Photograph: Jane Baker

Profits take wing at Pelican

NIGEL COPE

The blazing summer and the trend towards the café culture has doubled profits at Pelican group, the restaurant business that runs the Café Rouge and Dôme chains.

The company has been opening a new restaurant every day over the last six months and plans to have more than 100 by March. The new Café Rouge which opens today in Reigate, Surrey, will be the group's 91st. Roger Myers, the chief executive,

said the popularity of alfresco eating in the summer pushed up sales by 3 per cent as branches of the Dôme and Café Rouge feature pavement tables. But also said that eating out was becoming more popular.

"People are eating out more than ever," he said. "With the rise in the numbers of working women, people are looking for affordable places to eat out." The average price of a lunch at Café Rouge was still only £6.50, he said, while a dinner for two would cost £25. He added that

though his restaurants were seen as trendy places to visit there was still a resistance to higher prices.

Pelican has started to expand the Café Rouge concept outside of London with branches in Birmingham, Bristol, Brighton and Aberdeen. Next year the Dôme and Mamma Amalfi formats will also be taken nationwide.

"It's very pleasing that the concepts have worked so well outside London. We still have a lot of scope for expansion."

Pelican has opened or converted 64 restaurants since

April 1994. It has acquired Abbaye, a monastery-themed restaurant in Bromley, Kent. Pelican started with one restaurant in Richmond, Surrey in 1989 and has been expanding rapidly ever since. A second branch of Sheila's, a barbecue-style restaurant is also likely.

Pelican announced pre-tax profits up 124 per cent to £3m in the six months to September. Sales were up by 76 per cent to £24m. Shares closed 1p higher at 117.5p. The interim dividend increased by 30 per cent to 0.65p.

Jersey proposes tax haven for auditors

ROGER TRAPP

Jersey yesterday announced plans to introduce laws to limit the liability of accountants and other professionals amid speculation that other offshore financial centres will be quick to develop similar legislation that some fear will encourage "fly-by-night" organisations to leave Britain.

A spokeswoman for the island government said the competition between the centres was so intense that a swift response from somewhere such as Guernsey was likely.

Senator Peter Forsyth, president of the States of Jersey's finance and economics committee, said the planned law was "yet another example of the Jersey authorities working together with business to introduce new legislation" and added that he hoped the law would attract large multi-partner firms from other professions.

Meanwhile, Austin Mitchell, the Labour MP who has been a vociferous critic of accountants and other professionals for many years, has added his voice to the growing view that accountancy firms risk damaging their reputations by setting themselves up in places more

usually associated with tax elites and other fugitives. "It's barny. The only answer to this kind of legal action is good audits and they're not going to be able to do any better audits in Jersey than here," he said.

He also suggested that the firms might be seeking to panic the Government into moving quickly to reform the law of joint and several liability. This principle, which is being amended in the United States and elsewhere, is seen as the key to their problem since it can result in auditors meeting the whole loss of a corporate collapse even if they are only partly to blame.

As expected, Ernst & Young and Price Waterhouse, two of Britain's largest accountancy firms, confirmed yesterday that they had helped the States of Jersey's finance and economics committee develop the draft law that will be debated in the island's parliament in the first quarter of next year. If passed, it will have to go to the Privy Council for approval and could come into operation by the end of the year.

It is largely based on legislation already introduced in the US state of Delaware that has encouraged the country's leading accountancy firms to regis-

ter there. At present in Jersey – as in mainland Britain – limited liability is only open to partners who are not involved in the running of the business. But the new law would protect the personal assets of any partners not connected with a negligent act, while still making the overall partnership totally liable for all debts. In addition to paying an as yet undecided registration fee, each firm would also have to make a £5m financial provision from which to meet judgments against it.

The Jersey authorities trust that this and the island's "reputation for good regulation" will prevent the planned law being abused by individuals or organisations intent on using offshore status as a cover for suspicious activities.

Both Nick Land, senior partner of Ernst & Young, and Ian Brindle, his counterpart at Price Waterhouse, emphasised that they would not be seeking the tax advantages available to organisations registered in Jersey. Pointing out that they would continue to be regulated by the Institute of Chartered Accountants, they said that if they made the change it would not make any difference to how they operated.

Inflation figures 'open way for early rate cut'

DIANE COYLE
Economics Correspondent

Inflation is unlikely to fall much further, William Waldegrave, Chief Secretary to the Treasury, told MPs yesterday. "We don't think it's going to come down very much more. It's getting very low," he told the Treasury Select Committee.

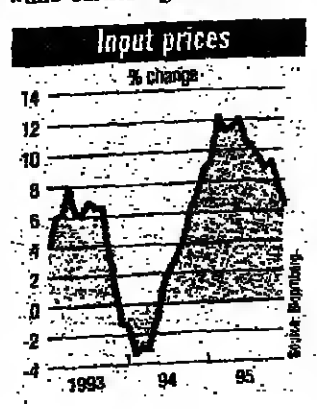
His remarks followed figures showing that inflationary pressures were receding. Analysts said that a slowdown in factory gate price rises last month had cleared the way for Chancellor Kenneth Clarke to cut base rates after his meeting tomorrow with Eddie George, Governor of the Bank of England.

"Economic conditions would make lower interest rates a prudent measure at the moment. It would not be a gamble," said Sean Shepley, an economist at investment bank CSFB. Many City economists expect a small cut in interest rates after tomorrow's meeting. Others think it will be postponed until the new year – particularly after Hans Tietmeyer, Bundesbank presi-

dent, played down hopes of an imminent fall in German interest rates.

Lower interest rates in Germany and the US, making it easier for Britain to follow suit, are expected in the next few weeks. But the Bank of England is expected to advise against an early move – raising the spectre of a re-run of the Governor's earlier disagreement with the Chancellor.

The annual rate of increase in factory gate prices declined to 4.3 per cent in November, while earlier figures were revised down.



Although year-on-year increases in paper and plastics prices remained high, they were much lower than earlier in the year. Computer prices fell 4 per cent in the year to November.

There was an encouraging drop in "core" output price inflation, excluding food and fuel. Its annual rate of increase in the latest three months – an indicator emphasised by the Bank of England – fell from 4.0 per cent to 3.4 per cent in November. Prices for materials declined slightly during the month, after adjusting for seasonal increases in food and fuel costs. Since the start of the year the annual rate of input price inflation has nearly halved, to 6.2 per cent, and has reached its lowest since August 1994.

The earlier alarming bulge in materials prices has been reversed, but economists at brokers Hoare Govett say that the fall has been driven by lower fuel prices. The year-on-year increase in "core" imported materials prices is still running at 14.5 per cent.

MUSIC & AVIATION: SPORT AS ART

THE BREITLING WORLD CUP OF AEROBATICS' 1995 season was staged successively in France (Salon aéronautique du Bourget), Canada (Abbotsford Airshow), California (Miramar NAS Airshow) and in Austria (Wiener Neustadt Flugmesse), ending with a spectacular finale at Tajima in Japan before 100,000 awed spectators who watched as the year's twelve finest pilots set to music the highly technical art of aerobatics.



HIGH-FLYING FINALE

Patrick Paris, who pilots the BREITLING CAP 232 plane, won that last event, taking second place in the year's overall standings, just behind Mudry factory pilot Dominique Roland, also flying a CAP 232, the winner of the 1995 BREITLING CUP. In third place aboard a Sukhoi 31 was Jurgis Kairys of Lithuania, whose performance confirmed that generous engine power and aerobatics were now perfectly compatible.

During this BREITLING WORLD CUP OF AEROBATICS flying season, over one million spectators rediscovered flying, aerobatics remaining a little-known aviation specialty that really merits greater public interest.



TO ATTRACT FRESH TALENTS

In 1996, as a further boost to competition flying, BREITLING is setting up an advanced aerobatics school in the U.S., Japan and Europe. Called the BREITLING ACADEMY, it is designed to allow talented up-and-coming pilots to receive advanced artistic and technical training. They will have an opportunity of honing their skills aboard high-performance aircraft (CAP 232, Extra 300S, Sukhoi 31) and training with the sport's most qualified pilots including Xavier de Lapparent, the current world champion, all concrete BREITLING contributions to the future of aerobatics.

PILOTS WANTED

Today still, aeronautics combines advanced technology and high adventure. Despite the routine of scheduled air travel, flying remains at the heart of one of man's oldest dreams.

Every year, BREITLING will furthermore sponsor an original project involving the world's airspace presented by a particularly imaginative pilot. Called BREITLING WINGS AWARD, it will reward the finest project submitted during the coming year.

AROUND THE WORLD IN 14 DAYS

In 1996, a project code-named BREITLING ORBITER will spearhead this new series of BREITLING-sponsored events. In a modern interpretation of an age-old dream, a non-stop globe-circling balloon trip will shortly become a reality. A Cameron-type balloon featuring a helium-filled sphere and a hot-air balloon have been designed to enable the lighter-than-air ORBITER to maintain an altitude of 8,000 to 12,000 meters even after sundown.



Winners of the first transatlantic balloon race in 1992, Bertrand Picard of Switzerland and Wim Verstraeten of Belgium will share a pressurized and thermally insulated cabin. They will be travelling far higher than before, at jumbo-jet altitudes, driven by jet-stream winds high above the legendary Silk Road, Korea and Japan to California then on to Nova Scotia and across to Europe again. BREITLING is particularly proud to sponsor an exploit of this magnitude and to provide its daring crew with chronographs of a highly unusual design.

THE INVESTMENT COLUMN

Edited by TOM STEVENSON

Alders struggles on weak legs

This has been a tough year for all retailers, but Alders seems to have struggled more than most. Its two-pronged approach to retailing, with department stores on the one hand and duty-free shops on the other was supposed to be a strength. Instead, weaknesses have emerged in both legs.

Department stores have been hit by weak consumer demand and the blazing summer.

The duty-free business is suffering from high opening costs and uncertainties over the European Union's approach to duty-free shopping.

The performance of the shares tells the story. Alders' shares were priced at 170p when they were floated two years ago. After peaking at 243p this May, they have been on the slide ever since. Yesterday they fell a further 21p to a record low of 168p.

Results for the year to September compounded the gloom. Pre-tax profits were down 8 per cent to £23.5m on sales that were up 13 per cent to £828m, although exceptional items cloud the picture somewhat.

Last year's figures included a £1.5m gain from property disposals. This year's are dented by a £1.1m cost relating mainly to the cost of opening new duty-free outlets in Copenhagen and Paris.

But the underlying position is uncertain at best. True, the department stores pushed up profits to £15.3m and like-for-like sales grew by around 2.5 per cent.

However, most of this gain is thought to have come from the flagship store in Croydon where building work in the surrounding shopping centre has now finished.

The rest of the chain is thought to be treading water.

The margin has also weakened due to a shift in the sales mix towards lower-margin goods such as perfumes and multi-media PCs.

The duty-free business has different problems. It is faced with the possible end of duty-free shopping in the European Union by 1999. Some 40 per cent of Alders' duty-free sales are in the EU, though half of this is in goods such as perfumes and cosmetics which are less affected.

Alders has also suffered from a £1m drop in incentive payments from BAA in its UK airports. This related to turnover targets set by the airports operator which were higher this year.

With analysts forecasting profits of

£22.5m for this year the shares are on a forward rating of 12.

This is a discount to the sector but with risks such as the EU duty-free ruling hanging over the stock, there is better value elsewhere.

Airtours suffers from sunburn

The big question facing the tour operators who have slashed next year's holiday capacity by a quarter to 8.5 million is whether they have done enough.

All depends on the key January to March booking season and the indicators, so far, suggest further cuts will be necessary.

Airtours' annual results yesterday showed a nasty dose of sunburn from this summer's season. Pre-tax profits dropped from £75.8m to £59m. But for a full year's inclusion of a healthy £25.2m from the acquired Scandinavia operations, the figures would have appeared even more dreadful.

The fact that the shares yesterday jumped 22p to 358p owes much to the results being at the top of a pessimistic range of forecasts, and because there were no additional surprises following the recent profits warning.

The shares have underperformed the market by 35 per cent this year.

Airtours' underlying bookings from the UK are currently down 25 per cent. Brochure prices have been increased, but by only enough to put them on a par with the cost of holidays sold in 1993.

What Airtours hopes, as do Thomson and First Choice, is that supply and demand will be equalised by the time school holidays start next summer to prevent a repeat of this year's giveaway of packages at below cost.

The giveaway was all too evident in Airtours' results, with profit per passenger crashing from £19.85 to £9.37 – equal to a drop in margin from 7.9 to 3.5 per cent.

While few in the industry dispute that this year is going to prove another big test, Airtours does have financial strengths and additional earnings streams from Scandinavia and now Canada to see it over the worst problems. The cash pile at the year-end totalled £305m, four times debt.

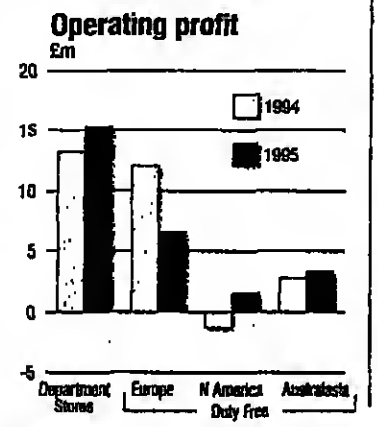
Analysts' forecasts vary greatly for the current year, starting at £65m pre-tax and rising towards £80m. The consensus p/e is a lowly 8.2 but, given that interest rates are likely to fall soon, the share price is well supported by a gross yield of 5.2 per cent on assumptions of a 15p dividend this year.

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Alders: at a glance

Market value: £193m, share price 168p

Five year record	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995
Turnover (£m)	568	558	631	672	796
Pre-tax profits (£m)	43.2	(3.4)	6.4	25.4	23.5
Earnings per share (pence)		(7.9)	4.3	17.6	15.7
Dividends per share (pence)	—	nil	nil	6.7	7.0



Yield underpins Kenwood

On the face of it these looked to be a good set of interim figures from Kenwood, the electrical appliance maker, with pre-tax profits a useful 24 per cent higher at £7.4m (£5.95m).

But the shares, which have been in steady retreat since the beginning of last year, slipped a further 2p to 229p, well below both the peak of 381p and the 1992 flotation price of 285p.

The market's worries, given a sizeable boost when former chief executive Tim Parker headed for the exit in October to run Clark the shoe maker, are justified. Kenwood has a number of intractable problems.

Its core UK food processor market is mature and highly susceptible to squeezes on disposable income. Raw materials are a further concern, accounting for 5 or 6 per cent of sales value and subject to often violent swings. Finally borrowings, representing 75 per cent of shareholders' funds at the half-way stage, leave little flexibility.

But Kenwood also has a number of advantages over its competitors. Its focus on achieving a low-cost manufacturing base has a good lead through a factory in China, which is currently working flat out to satisfy demand both from Kenwood and Japanese companies hit by the strong yen and attracted by the increasing quality of Chinese products.

The company is tackling the static food processor market by launching a steady stream of new products, such as travel irons, air conditioning units, rice cookers and espresso machines. And overseas there are still plenty of opportunities in markets where Kenwood is competing head-on with high-cost domestic manufacturers.

The balance between those pros and cons will determine whether you think a prospective price/earnings ratio of under 10 for the year to March, when profits of around £16m are likely, is fair or not. With a prospective yield of 5.5 per cent the shares are probably fairly underpriced.

Simon Pincombe CITY DIARY

Grand designs on Detroit dismissed as a lot of rot

Detroit is highly insulted by suggestions that 12 blocks of its old business district be turned into "a theme park of decay". The idea has been put forward by Camillo Jose Vergara, the famous New York photographer and writer, who wants to see the boarded-up downtown skyscrapers stabilised and then left to rot – creating what he calls an American Acropolis.

"We could transform nearly 100 troubled buildings into a grand national historic park of play and wonder," Mr Vergara said. "A memorial to industrial America."

The theory is that walls of the pre-Depression buildings would crumble to expose steel frames. Trees would grow through the ceilings and wild animals would return. Visitors could then stroll through the empty streets, bird-watching and collecting berries.

"It's the most ridiculous thing I've ever heard," exploded John Slater, chairman of the Detroit Planning Commission, who said he has plans to revive the business ethic in downtown Motown.

The continental weakness for a spot of DIY has claimed another victim. Hans Jakob Zimmermann, chairman-designate of the Thyssen subsidiary Handelunion, has surrendered both parts of his title after admitting he had his house renovated free of charge by various construction companies. Thyssen said the 51-year-old director had left the company after a short, but terminal, internal inquiry.

The exploits of the toupéeed Jürgen Schneider apart, corporate Germany has remained largely untouched by sleaze. That has traditionally been the preserve of the French. You will

recall industry minister Gerard Longuet, who resigned last year over allegations of bribery in connection with his villa in St Tropez. And Pierre Suard, chairman of electrical engineering group Alcatel, who allowed the French taxpayers to foot the bill for the refurbishment of his luxury Paris apartment.

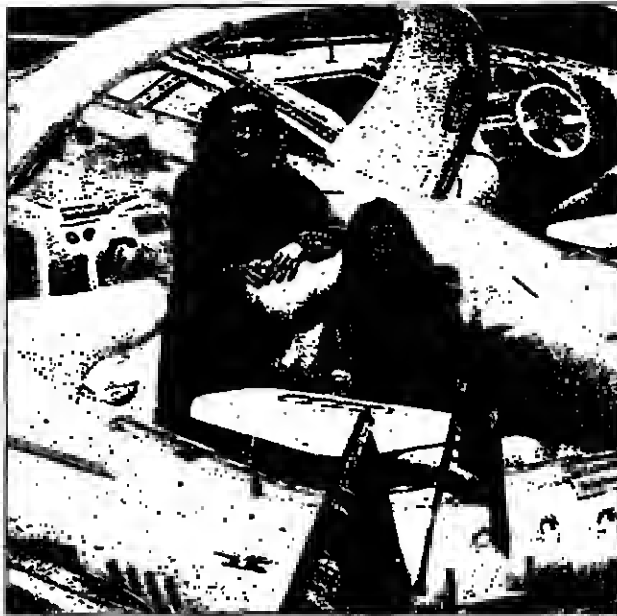
Mr Zimmermann, to borrow an English phrase, appears to have been banded to rights. According to Der Spiegel, the German weekly, the incident came to light when an anonymous letter was sent simultaneously to the Düsseldorf prosecutor and to Thyssen management. Confronted with the allegation Mr Zimmermann admitted everything.

Not that he had any choice. The value of the work carried out at Mr Zimmermann's house was 800,000 German marks (£360,360) of which 70 per cent is said to have been picked up by Hochtief, the construction giant. More than a quick paint job.

Bookmakers are predicting a complete shutdown in the City from 2.30pm today as the Varsity rugby kicks off in front of a 65,000 sell-out crowd at Twickenham. "A lot of people will either be at the match or watching it on television," said Sporting Index, the spread betting specialists, which is predicting brisk business.

Having thumped Western Samoa, Cambridge University are firm favourites to win by a margin of 8 to 11 points.

Documents forming an integral part of the Forté defence strategy have had to be corrected after they were found to contain misleading information. The Christmas party of the Savoy Group press office will not take place on Thursday 19 December as the invitation states. The 19th is a Tuesday.



Free-loading at the London International Boat show comes to an abrupt end. Stung by a loss of revenue the organisers have "revised" the complimentary ticket procedure to exclude non-essential riff-raff. Free tickets will no longer be issued without full accreditation and accompanying photograph. Another fine tradition sinks slowly below the Plimsoll line.

IN BRIEF

Greene King lifts beer and food sales

Greene King, brewers of Greene King IPA and Abbot Ale, has seen real growth in beer volumes and food sales in the first half of the year. Profits from the company's managed pubs rose 14 per cent, while the tenanted business, still the largest part of the group, grew profits 5 per cent to £7.65m. That fed into a group total raised from £9.81m to £11.1m in the 24 weeks to 15 October. The interim dividend rises 10 per cent to 4.5p. In view of the recent state of the property market, the board has begun a property revaluation 12 months ahead of the time dictated by the company's normal five-year schedule. The results will be incorporated in the full-year results.

Higher Carclo margins boost profits

Carclo Engineering remains optimistic about the outlook despite a recent fall in orders in certain businesses. The textile equipment to wire ropes group said the drop in order volumes since September had resulted from de-stocking by some customers, but the trend was not expected to continue. Higher margins pushed interim profits 12 per cent higher to £8.2m in the six months to September. The half-time dividend is raised 7.5 per cent to 3.44p.

Court Cavendish depreciates property

Court Cavendish, the nursing home operator, has moved to depreciate its property assets, taking a £360,000 charge in the latest six months. The cost of the change would be £760,000 in a full year. Half-year profits to October were held at £2.34m as a result of the charge, an underlying rise of 16 per cent. The half-way dividend goes up 15 per cent to 1.78p.

COMPANY RESULTS

	Turnover £	Pre-tax £	EPS	Dividend
Airtours (p)	1,329m (0.97m)	59.1m (73.8m)	34.7p (40.2p)	14p (10.9p)
Alders (p)	829m (733m)	53.5m (25.3m)	15.7p (17.9p)	4.9p (4.5p)
API Group (p)	94.7m (78.2m)	8.35m (7.01m)	27.4p (20p)	10p (8.0p)
Carclo Engineering (p)	76.0m (67.2m)	8.2m (7.3m)	9.2p (8.3p)	3.44p (3.2p)
Court Cavendish (p)	13.3m (11.3m)	2.6m (2.2m)	10.2p (9.5p)	1.78p (1.55p)
Electronic Data (p)	12.0m (14.0m)	3.1m (4.1m)	7.53p (10.21p)	2.15p (2p)
Flintcom (p)	174m (149m)	9.07m (11.9m)	4.9p (4p)	1.8p (1.1p)
Greene King (p)	78.1m (71.5m)	11.1m (8.8m)	19.3p (17.5p)	4.5p (4.1p)
Interserve (p)	1,457m (1,404m)	147m (139m)	45.9p (40.4p)	7.7p (6.5p)
Johnson & Paton (p)	133m (130m)	5.61m (4.35m)	2.9p (1.6p)	0.7p (nil)
Kenwood (p)	87.2m (80.4m)	7.4m (5m)	11.3p (11.2p)	3.25p (3.25p)
Pollina (p)	24.0m (13.8m)	3.02m (1.87m)	2.9p (1.63p)	0.65p (0.55p)

(p) - Final (p) - Interim (p) - 24 weeks to Oct 15

The need for a faster growth strategy

ECONOMIC VIEW

HAMISH McRAE



Against this background some cut in UK rates really does seem likely. But of course we are just talking about a modest shaving of one particular interest rate. On a long historical view it matters not one jot whether base rates go up, down or sideways as a result of this

has been much larger. It is as though the unpleasant experience of negative real rates in the 1970s has to be paid for: the markets are in a way getting their own back.

This is not a British issue: it is a global one. We may or may not do a bit better than the rest

side of the graph is secure. Mr Clarke will eventually achieve his desire of lower interest rates, and Mr George will achieve his desire of lower inflation. The only difference is that the former may not be in office to enjoy it.

Whether the downward trend is indeed secure of course depends on the grand forces of the global economy – in particular the continuing downward pressure on the price of goods caused by new, low-wage entrants into the world market, the relentless drive to improve the

Looking 10 or 20 years ahead the balance of probability is in favour of low global inflation

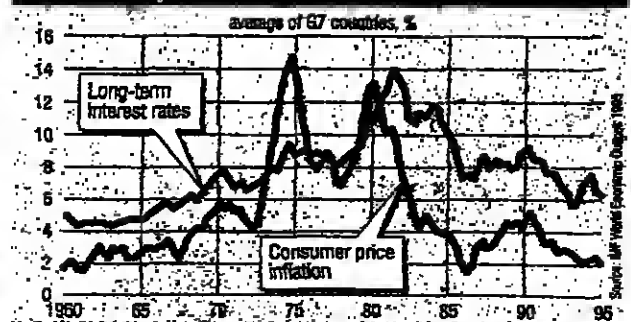
particular meeting. What matters is whether the long-term trend of inflation (and hence long term interest rates) continues to be down.

The long-term context into which this decision fits is shown in the graph, which shows both inflation and interest rates in the Group of Seven nations since 1960. Seven messages from that graph are very, very clear. One is the clear upward trend of both lines until the late 1970s, with the twin peaks of inflation, and the upward pull this exerted on bond yields. The second is the clear downward trend of both lines since then. And the third is the extent to which the natural relationship of positive real interest rates has been restored. That long-term interest rates have to be positive was evident in the 1960s, but in the 1980s the gap between the two

of the pack, but the differences will be less than the similarities. However it does affect Britain, for if the long-term trend of inflation continues down, so too will our bond yields and so too will short-term interest rates. In other words, if that downward trend on the right hand

efficiency of the developed world in response, and the discipline exercised by financial markets on governments which fail to deliver an acceptable inflation performance. Looking ahead 10 or 20 years the balance of probability surely is in favour of still-low global inflation.

35 years of interest rates and inflation



Compass attacks re-listing

JOHN SHEPHERD

Compass Group has objected strongly to the Stock Exchange over the decision to shift its share listing from the hotels and leisure sector to the breweries, pubs and restaurants grouping. Some leading leisure analysts are even more furious because Thorn EMI is being moved from leisure and reclassified under publishing just months before its planned break-up.

The changes were announced last week by FTSE International, the joint venture between the Stock Exchange and the Financial Times.

Shares in the Alpha Airports in-flight catering, airport retailing and ground services company are also being reclassified from hotels and leisure to business support services.

Some analysts are concerned the move could hit the share price of Compass whose shares made on a price earnings multiple of 17, compared with around 14.5 for the leading brewing and pub companies.

Steve Vale, secretary to the FTSE International reclassification committee, said the decision to move Compass owed much to the strategic, and highly profitable moves by the brewers and pub operators to sell more food.

Francis Mackay, deputy chairman and chief executive of Compass, said it would cost much time and money to educate new analysts.

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STERLING		DOLLAR		D-MARK		
Country	1 month	3 months	1 month	3 months	Spot	
US	18337	19-4	20-22	1320	—	0824
Canada	2516	19-4	19-18	1330	1-1	0855
France	7245	20-45	37-28	1442	26-22	0843
Germany	2708	20-45	37-28	1442	26-22	0843
Japan	2610	610-420	330-410	1416	26-22	0843
Italy	24464	81-88	230-22	99-53	26-22	0843
Netherlands	24464	81-88	230-22	99-53	26-22	0843
Spain	12092	31-37	38-22	12757	2-4	0846
UK	12092	31-37	38-22	12757	2-4	0846
Belgium	45520	120-15	31-30	10989	49-38	0879
Denmark	83500	120-15	31-30	10989	49-38	0879
Finland	47409	20-41	37-28	1442	26-22	0843
Ireland	69689	34-38	34-38	15852	4-5	0870
Norway	57817	127-25	34-38	15852	4-5	0870
Sweden	66735	127-25	34-38	15852	4-5	0870
Switzerland	17867	71-64	51-12	1389	35-35	0821
Australia*	23281	8-21	43-43	1389	35-35	0821
Brunei*	23281	8-21	43-43	1389	35-35	0821
Malaysia*	23281	8-21	43-43	1389	35-35	0821
New Zealand*	23281	8-21	43-43	1389	35-35	0821
South Africa*	23281	8-21	43-43	1389	35-35	0821
Thailand*	23281	8-21	43-43	1389	35-35	0821

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Malaysia*	23281	8-21	43-43	1389	35-35	0821
New Zealand*	23281	8-21	43-43	1389	35-35	0821
South Africa*	23281	8-21	43-43	1389	35-35	0821
Thailand*	23281	8-21	43-43	1389	35-35	0821

Country	Starling	Dollar	Country	Starling	Dollar
Argentina	12542	10000	Nigeria	92770	955500
Austria	14593	10004	Poland	93620	93620
Brazil	14593	10004	Portugal	92489	94226
China	127554	53367	Philippines	104261	251293
Egypt	52292	34241	Romania	91720	91720
France	14593	10004	Saudi Arabia	15393	33940
Germany	14593	10004	Spain	709565	427290
Ghana	24401	192000	Sweden	45926	45926
India	96247	239100	Switzerland	15895	27200
Italy	14593	10004	Taiwan	15895	27200
Japan	14593	10004	UAE	45926	45926
Russia	14593	10004			

Note: Forward rates quoted below to low are as a discount (movement from spot rates, those quoted low are at a premium). For example, the forward rate for the dollar against the yen is 100.0125 yen per dollar, which is a discount on the spot rate of 100.0125 yen per dollar.

Country	Starling	Dollar	Country	Starling	Dollar
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Egypt	52292	34241	Romania	91720	91720
France	14593	10004	Saudi Arabia	15393	33940
Germany	14593	10004	Spain	709565	427290
Ghana	24401	192000	Sweden	45926	45926
India	96247	239100	Switzerland	15895	27200
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2 Bays	2 Bays	2 Bays			
Austria (Dollars)	2,055	France (Francs)	73600	New Zealand (Dollars)	2,3200
Austria (Schillings)	16,0000	Germany (Dollars)	2,950	Norway (Krones)	900000
Belgium (Francs)	44,0000	Greece (Drachmas)	361,0000	Portugal (Escudos)	222,0000
Canada (Dollars)	2,0950	Hong Kong (Dollars)	11,6400	Spain (Pesetas)	162,5000
Ceylon (Pounds)	0,0900	Ireland (Pounds)	0,0500	Switzerland (Francs)	10,000
Denmark (Kroner)	8,3300	Italy (Lira)	226,0000	Sweden (Kronor)	1,725
Finland (Markka)	2,4500	Japan (Yen)	18,0000	Turkey (Lira)	9,965,0000
Poland (Zloty)	6,8600	Malta (Lira)	0,5550	United States (Dollars)	1,4975

2 Bays		2 Bays		2 Bays	
Austria (Dollars)	2,055	France (Francs)	7,300	New Zealand (Dollars)	2,320
Austria (Schillings)	16,000	Germany (Dollars)	2,350	Norway (Krones)	90,000
Belgium (Francs)	44,000	Greece (Drachmas)	381,000	Portugal (Escudos)	222,000
Canada (Dollars)	2,050	Hong Kong (Dollars)	11,400	Spain (Pesetas)	162,500
Ceylon (Pounds)	0,050	Ireland (Pounds)	0,050	Switzerland (Francs)	10,000
Denmark (Kroner)	8,330	Italy (Lira)	226,000	Sweden (Kronor)	1,725
Finland (Markkas)	2,425	Japan (Yen)	18,500	Turkey (Liras)	9,962,500
Poland (Zlotys)	8,820	Malaya (Ringgits)	0,550	United States (Dollars)	1,495

UK	Germany	US	Japan
Base	Discount	Prime	Discount
France	Lombard	Discount	Belgium
Intervention	Canada	Fixed Funds	8.50%
Italy	Prime	10-Day Repo	Central
Spain	Discount	Swiss	Switzerland
Netherlands	Discount	Swiss	Discount
Australia	Discount	Swiss	Lombard
			4.50%

UK	Germany	US	Japan
Base	Discount	Prime	Discount
France	Lombard	Discount	Belgium
Intervention	Canada	Fixed Funds	8.50%
Italy	Prime	10-Day Repo	Central
Spain	Discount	Swiss	Switzerland
Netherlands	Discount	Swiss	Discount
Australia	Discount	Swiss	Lombard
			4.50%

Country	8yr	yield %	10yr	yield %	Country	8yr	yield %	10yr	yield %
UK	6%	598	8 1/2%	251	Netherlands	6%	508	8 1/2%	322
US	6 1/4%	535	8 3/4%	575	Spain	12%	367	10 1/2%	321
Japan	6 1/2%	321	4 1/2%	252	Italy	11 1/2%	357	6 1/2%	123
Australia	7%	280	7 1/2%	268	Belgium	7 1/2%	489	6 1/2%	539
Germany	4 1/4%	438	6 1/2%	329	Switzerland	6 1/2%	523	6%	388
France	7%	603	7 1/2%	581	ECU Dth	9 1/2%	628	7 1/2%	22

Source: *Financial Times* 12/12/84. ¹Yields calculated on long issues. ²Duration 10 years.

Country	8yr	yield %	10yr	yield %	Country	8yr	yield %	10yr	yield %
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Source: *Financial Times* (London) 12/12/84. ¹Yields calculated on long issues. ²Duration 10 years.

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Contract	Settlement price	High/Low for day	End/Close traded	Open interest
German Gilt	(Dec 95) 120-28	111-83 110-28	2166	33016
UK Gilts	(Mar 96) 98-69	98-38 98-05	54777	206272
Italian Bond	(Mar 96) 102-10	102-11 102-04	7815	10100
Italian Bond	(Mar 96) 98-07	78-38 78-50	10550	47329
S&P 500	(Dec 95) 93-15	93-15 93-15	7815	7815
S&P 500	(Mar 96) 93-80	93-84 93-60	59973	63967
IM Euro Stoxx	(Dec 95) 84-25	84-25 84-25	5283	11700
IM Euro Stoxx	(Mar 96) 84-25	84-25 84-25	5283	11700
IM Euro Stoxx	(Mar 96) 96-56	96-37 96-37	18205	7682
ECU	(Dec 95) 94-58	94-80 94-57	381	5882
ECU	(Mar 96) 94-61	94-61 94-61	5420	5420
ECU SFr	(Dec 95) 97-78	97-78 97-71	2254	15494
FTSE 100	(Dec 95) 3065.0	3060.0 3060.0	1988	48804
FTSE 100	(Mar 96) 3065.0	3065.0 3065.0	475	475
FTSE 100	(Dec 95) 88-53	88-58 88-51	9597	20033

Contract	Settlement price	High/Low for day	End/Close traded	Open interest
German Gilt	(Dec 95) 120-28	111-83 110-28	2166	33016
UK Gilts	(Mar 96) 98-69	98-38 98-05	54777	206272
Italian Bond	(Mar 96) 102-10	102-11 102-04	7815	10100
Italian Bond	(Mar 96) 98-07	78-38 78-50	10550	47329
S&P 500	(Dec 95) 93-15	93-15 93-15	7815	7815
S&P 500	(Mar 96) 93-80	93-84 93-60	59973	63967
IM Euro Stoxx	(Dec 95) 84-25	84-25 84-25	5283	11700
IM Euro Stoxx	(Mar 96) 84-25	84-25 84-25	5283	11700
IM Euro Stoxx	(Mar 96) 96-56	96-37 96-37	18205	7682
ECU	(Dec 95) 94-58	94-80 94-57	381	5882
ECU	(Mar 96) 94-61	94-61 94-61	5420	5420
ECU SFr	(Dec 95) 97-78	97-78 97-71	2254	15494
FTSE 100	(Dec 95) 3065.0	3060.0 3060.0	1988	48804
FTSE 100	(Mar 96) 3065.0	3065.0 3065.0	475	475
FTSE 100	(Dec 95) 88-53	88-58 88-51	9597	20033

Series	Settlement price: 3662.0	closing offer price		Call/Put
				Total/vols
December	3600	3650	3700	1/103 ..
January	61/8	22/15	4/53	1/103 ..
February	95/33	63/52	38/76	20/113 ..
March	120/47	90/67	66/93	43/125 ..
	142/66	110/85	85/111	60/136 ..

Series	Settlement price: 3662.0	closing offer price		Call/Put
				Total/vols
December	3600	3650	3700	1/103 ..
January	61/8	22/15	4/53	1/103 ..
February	95/33	63/52	38/76	20/113 ..
March	120/47	90/67	66/93	43/125 ..
	142/66	110/85	85/111	60/136 ..

INDUSTRIAL METALS - London Metal Exchange									
Inshore		Cash		3 mths		Volume		LME Stocks	
		\$	£	\$	£				chg
Alu.	H84-85	1644-85	1679-90		51429		571945	20	7750
Alu.	Alloy	1440-20	1480-60		771		571945	20	380
Brass	A	283-40	283-40		77122		230035	20	855
Copper		74-94	73-44		855		49578	20	855
Nickel		8220-30	8345-80		9211		49578	20	888
Lead		6380-60	6380-85		9209		12400	20	900
Zinc		1306-40	1306-40		9203		690300	20	2000
Stripped Coppers		\$	\$ <td>\$ <td>\$ <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> </td></td>	\$ <td>\$ <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> </td>	\$ <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td>				
		12545	1445	100/7					
PRECIOUS METALS									
	\$	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
Platinum	4860	27175	Britannia	405	264	Kruggerand	382595	594592	
Palladium	32375	24230	Britannia	203	202	Soes	61955	594592	
Gold	38550	24230	Britannia	203	202	Soes	61955	594592	
Gold Bufr	38550	24230	Britannia	203	202	Soes	61955	594592	

INDUSTRIAL METALS - London Metal Exchange									
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		12545	1445	100/7					
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Gold	38550	24230	Britannia	203	202	Soes	61955	594592	
Gold Bufr	38550	24230	Britannia	203	202	Soes	61955	594592	

White Sugar		Raw Sugar		Freight		Wheat		Corn		1000 Pkts Cotton Seed	
LCB	Shannon	LCB	Shannon	LCB	Shannon	LCB	Shannon	LCB	Shannon	LCB	Shannon
Dec	171	Jan	213	Jan	1545	Dec	1709	Apr	303	May	303
Mar	942	Mar	957	Mar	1135	Apr	2700	May	303	May	303
May	991	May	1772	May	1235	May	3000	Jun	303	Jun	303
Nov	2,274	Nov	5,095	Nov	179	Nov	46	Nov	46	Nov	46

White Sugar		Raw Sugar		Freight		Wheat		Corn		1000 Pkts Cotton Seed	
LCB	Shannon	LCB	Shannon	LCB	Shannon	LCB	Shannon	LCB	Shannon	LCB	Shannon
Dec	171	Jan	213	Jan	1545	Dec	1709	Apr	303	May	303
Mar	942	Mar	957	Mar	1135	Apr	2700	May	303	May	303
May	991	May	1772	May	1235	May	3000	Jun	303	Jun	303
Nov	2,274	Nov	5,095	Nov	179	Nov	46	Nov	46	Nov	46

	Mr	Cohen (NY)	Likierich	7596	Jan/feb	San Jose	CA	Strom	6550
Dec	Wid	Accounting	6000	Feb	Repaired	OK	FL/NDG	8175	
Jan	Mr	Builder	Accounting	4260	Repaired	OK	Strom	8250	
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Wire act to halt Harris rumours

Rugby League

DAVE HADFIELD

Warrington have wanted off any club pursuing the Welsh international, Iestyn Harris, insisting that he is not for sale at any price.

The game a bush telegraph is buzzing with reports that Leeds or Wigan would match the world record £200,000 that took Paul Newson to St Helens in order to get their hands on Harris.

There is manoeuvring going on, says Graham Armstrong, Warrington's chief executive, said. "There have been no firm offers, but he is simply not for sale in any case. He is the last person on our books we would sell."

Harris, still only 19, shone for Wales in the World Cup in October and has since had approaches from Welsh rugby union clubs.

Warrington have also found their young loose forward, Paul Sculthorpe, in Leeds' sights, but are equally adamant that he is not leaving. "We should be flattered, because it shows what good young players we have got, but they are not going anywhere," Armstrong said.

The former Warrington and Wales forward, Mike Nicholas,

has set up an office in Cardiff to recruit players for what would be rugby's first year-round, mixed code club.

Nicholas' old union club, Aberavon, are planning to enter a side in the Second Division of the Rugby League and he is looking for players to play either code - or both.

"I have had the go-ahead from the League and from Aberavon," Nicholas said. "I want to break down the barriers. It could be a complementary thing, with league getting established here and union players improving their skills by playing our game."

Warrington, last year's beaten finalists, have been drawn to meet St Helens at Knowsley Road in the first semi-final of the Regal Trophy on 30 December.

Their Australian scrum-half, Greg Mackay, will leave for home after the match against Castleford on Friday. Mackay had been linked with the job as coach of the Super League team in Paris, but a French coach will be appointed this week.

The Regal holders, Wigan, who are likely to be without Andy Farrell until January now that he has decided to have a groin operation, are at home to

Leeds, the only side to beat them this season, on 6 January. Wigan could also be without Va'anga Tu'itavaka with a gashed knee and Jason Robinson with a shoulder injury for their match against Halifax tomorrow night.

Halifax have signed the Auckland Warriors utility player, Martin Moana, on a two-year contract. Moana is one of the players released by the Warriors as they turn down their squad for the Super League.

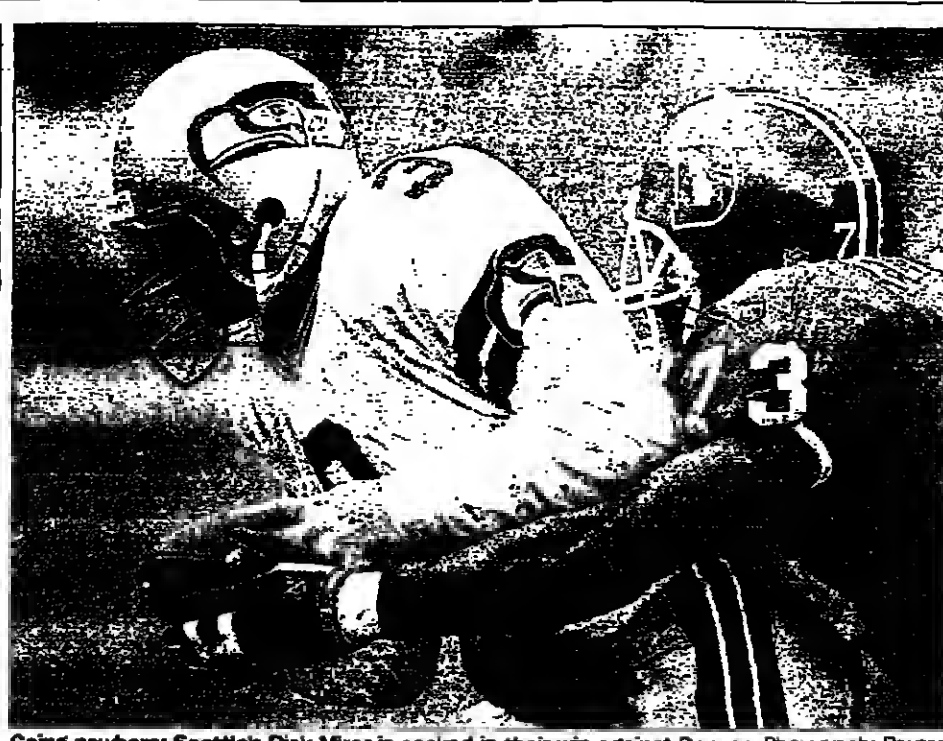
"He comes recommended by John Monie and also by Dean Bell, who played alongside him," Steve Simms, the Halifax coach, said.

Moana, aged 22 and a former Junior Kiwi, made six first-team appearances for Auckland last season, and will arrive as soon as he has obtained a work permit. Primarily a stand-off or loose forward, he can also play centre.

Oldham have been fined £4,000, suspended for 12 months, for deliberately fielding a weakened side against Warrington in August.

Keighley have given an undertaking not to sign any more players after falling behind on payments for several transfers.

REGAL TROPHY Semi-Finals: St Helens v Wigan (30 December); Wigan v Leeds (6 January).



Going nowhere: Seattle's Rock Mirer is sacked in their win against Denver. Photograph: Reuters

Switzer pays full price for call

American football

A dubious call by the Dallas Cowboys head coach Barry Switzer backfired on Sunday and let in the Philadelphia Eagles. Switzer elected to go for a first down on fourth-and-one at the Cowboys' 29. Emmitt Smith's run was stopped for no gain, but the referees blew the whistle for the two-minute warning prior to the snap.

Switzer left his offense on the field and ran the same play and Smith was halted again. Philadelphia ran three plays that gained four yards, then Gary Anderson kicked a field goal from 42 yards to win the game 20-17.

Philadelphia (9-5) moved to within one game of leaders Dallas (10-4) in the NFC East. Despite the loss, Dallas clinched a play-off berth when Chicago and St Louis lost.

Sri Lanka try to repair image

Cricket

Sri Lanka 251 and 330

Australia 617-5 dec (Australia win by an innings and 36 runs)

After losing the first Test by an innings at Perth yesterday Sri Lanka submitted a two-page report to the match referee outlining their view of the incident on Saturday which led to them being found guilty of ball-tampering.

On the field Shane Warne captured three wickets, taking his total to 201 in just 42 Tests.

(Fourth day of the Sri Lanka tour of Australia - First innings 251, 1st Test, Perth, 11-12 December 1995. Sri Lanka 251, 1st Test, Perth, 11-12 December 1995. Sri Lanka 251, 1st Test, Perth, 11-12 December 1995.)

Sri Lanka		Australia	
Ranasinghe	10	Warne	3
Aravinda de Silva	11	Warne	3
Aravinda de Silva	11	Warne	3
Aravinda de Silva	11	Warne	3
Aravinda de Silva	11	Warne	3

Twose stands firm

Pakistan 208 & 334

New Zealand 286 & 158-7

New Zealand, set 357 to win, were fighting to avoid defeat against Pakistan in Christchurch. Roger Twose made an unbeaten 44 in just over three hours, but at the end of the fourth day New Zealand were struggling at 158 for 7. The leg-spinner Mushtaq Ahmed did most of the damage, taking 5 for 43 from 27 overs.

(Pakistan 208 & 334, 1st Test, Christchurch, 11-12 December 1995. Pakistan 208 & 334, 1st Test, Christchurch, 11-12 December 1995. Pakistan 208 & 334, 1st Test, Christchurch, 11-12 December 1995.)

Pakistan		New Zealand	
Arif Shahzad	19	Twose	44
Arif Shahzad	19	Twose	44
Arif Shahzad	19	Twose	44
Arif Shahzad	19	Twose	44
Arif Shahzad	19	Twose	44

Jockey Club matches the punishment to the crime

Racing

GREG WOOD

Five years ago, few would have believed that the words "Jockey Club" and "punishment" would ever occupy the same sentence. But just weeks after its overhaul of the local stewards system the Club yesterday announced significant changes to the process for penalising errant jockeys, which were prompted, at least in part, by the concerns of the riders themselves.

The most persistent of these worries was the growing number of jockeys being automatically referred to the Club's Disciplinary Committee for punishment - almost invariably a long suspension - following their third offence of the season. This could mean a rider receiving a lengthy ban for a very minor third infraction, a problem exaggerated by the

ever-increasing workload of many jockeys. Lanfranco Dettori has partnered a unthinkable 1,000 horses in Britain this year.

Under a new system outlined by the Jockey Club yesterday, coming into effect on 1 January 1996, suspensions will be calculated on a rolling 12-month basis rather than the current system, under which the slate is wiped clean at the end of a season. When a jockey is found guilty of a riding offence, local stewards will impose a penalty purely to match the severity of the infraction, and without taking previous offences into account. This would range from a caution (for example, for a first offence in 12 months) or to a 10-day ban for careless riding, to 10 to 14 days, or an immediate referral to Portman Square, for particularly serious cases of reckless riding or intentional interference.

"Jockeys who persistently break the rules deserve a long suspension," said Anthony Midgway-White, chairman of the committee. "The referral system, away from the pressures of the racecourse, allows the committee to consider a jockey's riding as a whole. This provides the opportunity for advice as well as punishment."

Only when a rider has been suspended for a total of 12 days or more will he be referred to the Disciplinary Committee, and only on the next occasion he commits a similar type of offence (as at present, riding and whip penalties will be treated separately). Since the new system should make it harder for most jockeys to book themselves a trip to the Square, those who do can expect stern treatment, with a ban appropriate to the offence plus a minimum of 14 days for the accumulation.

"We were very pleased to be part of the decision-making process and I'm optimistic that the new package is fairer and reflects the demands that a 12-month season puts on jockeys," said Michael Caulfield, secretary of the Jockeys' Association.

And most hopeful of all, perhaps, is the feeling that the spirit of co-operation seems likely to persist well beyond the festive season.

defence of a suspension for up to six months, to allow a rider to attempt to address his bad habits. The new system will also start from scratch on 1 January, with no account taken of transgressions during the past 12 months, a point which particularly pleased Michael Caulfield, secretary of the Jockeys' Association.

"We were very pleased to be part of the decision-making process and I'm optimistic that the new package is fairer and reflects the demands that a 12-month season puts on jockeys," said Michael Caulfield, secretary of the Jockeys' Association.

And most hopeful of all, perhaps, is the feeling that the spirit of co-operation seems likely to persist well beyond the festive season.

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Sound money for Man

One Man, who backed for the King George VI Chase yesterday, Coral cut the grey's odds from 100-30 to 5-2 for the Boxing Day event at Kempton.

William Hill, who started yesterday quoting One Man at 11-4, trimmed his price to 5-2. One factor behind the moves

was confirmation that the Irish-trained Sound Man will miss the Lincolnshire event. The bay will bypass the race to follow a more traditional build-up to the two-mile Queen Mother Champion Chase at Cheltenham Festival in March.

"Could be Better and Rough Stuff, first and second in the Hennessy Gold Cup, are set to clash in the Betwager Cup Handicap Chase at Ascot on Saturday.

Lavinia, Duchess of Norfolk, obituary, page 16

Heat over frost

Edward Gillespie, the official in charge at Cheltenham on Saturday, could face disciplinary action after the Jockey Club yesterday ordered reports to be drawn up over the late abandonment of the meeting.

Gillespie has come under fire for his handling of information concerning the frozen state of the track.

Heat over frost

Heat over frost

Heat over frost

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sport

Netherlands face dilemma over Bergkamp's selection



Bergkamp: place under threat

It seems almost unthinkable, the Dutch without Dennis Bergkamp. But that is the dilemma facing coach Guus Hiddink ahead of tomorrow night's European Championship play-off against the Republic of Ireland at Anfield.

Bergkamp, given a new lease of life by Arsenal after two years of torment in Italy, will probably be spared the humiliation and claim his place after spending a week recuperating from an injured calf.

Such is the concern about his form for the Netherlands that the issue has clouded preparations for a game which deter-

mines who qualifies for the finals of Euro 96 in England next summer.

While Bergkamp - the world's most expensive footballer when he left Ajax for £8m - struggled in an Internazionale side that failed to accommodate his prodigious talent, he always produced the goods at international level. Now, as the 26-year-old's club career begins to take off at Highbury, he cannot score for a Dutch side that considers itself fortunate to still be in with a chance of qualifying.

The doubts that haunted his time in Italy have now followed Bergkamp on to the national

Rob Fleur reports on a possible change in Dutch tactics against the Republic

stage, leaving Hiddink with his highest headache since succeeding Dick Advocaat last year. Bergkamp's performances for the Netherlands have been on a downward spiral since the World Cup in the United States, but so far he has been an ever-present in the European Championship campaign.

He is included in the squad for tomorrow night, but will Hiddink do the unthinkable and drop the self-effacing player? Maybe a clue came in the

last match against Norway at home, which the Netherlands won 3-0 to finish second in Group Five.

Bergkamp, with just one goal in the qualifiers, was so ineffective that he was replaced by Youri Mulder, who promptly scored. Despite such an obvious show of dissatisfaction, the feeling is that Hiddink will name him in the starting line-up.

There can, it seems, be no half measures. According to sources close to the Dutch camp,

Bergkamp, with 41 caps, is not a player to accept a place on the bench. Indeed, Hiddink is said to believe it pointless to call up someone of such calibre if he is not to play from the outset.

Nevertheless, the worries remain and the manager must figure out how to lift Bergkamp for a game in which his skill could be a decisive factor. Hiddink apparently believes the answer is to take the troubled player back to his glory days with Ajax and slot him into a familiar position.

Under this scenario, Patrick Kluyvert would play up front with Bergkamp constantly lurking just behind - a relationship

similar to the one he is enjoying with Ian Wright at Arsenal. Because of suspensions, the Ajax system would also allow Hiddink to move inspirational midfielder Clarence Seedorf into central defence alongside Danny Blind, Ronald de Boer

would take up his usual position on the right side of midfield, with Mark Overmars and Bergkamp's Arsenal team-mate, Glenn Helder, on the wings.

The Dutch are at pains to stress the importance of this game. Their European dreams were in tatters after a 3-1 defeat by the Czech Republic in Prague and a 1-0 loss in Belarus.

However, Luxembourg handed them a lifeline by upsetting the Czechs and by the time they beat Norway, the Netherlands - who have not missed a major tournament since 1988 - were beginning to look the part again.

Now, with Ajax continuing to carry all before them at club level, they are determined to maintain that improvement. Despite his doubts about Bergkamp, Hiddink is in a bullish mood. "Do I consider being beaten by the Irish? No, not at all," he said, "because a country that succeeds twice to undo an elimination should never lose the qualification again."

Conquering the boxer's pain

John Roberts, in the second part of an investigation into sports psychology, hears how a hypnotherapist has helped transform the career of Steve Collins

Carmen Basilio, a rugged world welterweight and middleweight champion of the 1950s who numbered Sugar Ray Robinson among his conquests, was asked if it helped to bleed himself before each round. "Not if you can't fight," he replied.

Something similar might be said in relation to Steve Collins, Ireland's World Boxing Organisation super-middleweight champion, who has brought a new dimension to applying mind over matter. Collins goes into the ring with a clinical hypnotherapist in his corner who professes to have trained him to be able to control pain and bleeding.

According to the hypnotherapist, Tony Quinn, this is achieved through "the unconscious attention response", a process he says he has used to help hospital patients undergo surgery without anaesthetic.

One volunteer was his secretary, Collette Milles, who decided to have her ears pinned back. "Often the people that you know are the hardest to work with," says Quinn, a consultant to a chain of Irish health centres whose expertise in concentrating the mind has been sought by actors, politicians and businessmen.

So how does the "unconscious attention response" theory work? "If I asked you to give me your full attention, and I'm talking about something you're not interested in, you may not bother giving me any attention at all. So I call that inattention. If you are studying a subject that you're not really interested in, you can pay conscious attention, where you force yourself to pay attention, because you have to pay attention."

"Then there's the third aspect, which is called unconscious attention, where you're so totally involved in the subject that there's no part of you left over that's conscious that you're paying attention, if that makes sense. It's like being so totally involved in a good book that you don't hear traffic sounds around you or a person speaking to you."

A simple example of it was when I was working with Dr Jack Gibson, who supervised my research with the University of East London. Dr Gibson found that if he had to stitch the face of a person who had been in an accident, and they looked to him desperately in a state of fear to do something for them, that is a state of unconscious attention.

"The person's whole mind is wrapped around the doctor at that point, and if the doctor says to them, 'If you relax completely you're not going to feel it, in fact it will feel very pleasant to you, you'll actually enjoy it', amazingly enough it actually seems to take place."

"Strictly speaking, I don't see myself as a hypnotherapist. I don't control anybody's mind. I help them gain control of their own mind, to get it to do what they want it to do. I'm not a medical doctor, it's very important to say that. I have a doctorate in clinical hypnotherapy and a masters degree in psychotherapy and I'm also doing a PhD in psychology. I also have qualifications as a PT instructor and in the area of nutrition. I won 12 national titles as a body-builder, so I know about

trained has an advantage, because to a fair degree you can control your energy, you can control the bleeding. And, even more importantly, you can actually control your recovery after the fight is over."

"Where normally, Steve told me, he could have great pain all over and every muscle in his body would ache for about two or three weeks afterwards, he was OK within an hour or so. He could control his own pain, even to the bruises and swellings, as we found that people did in the operations."

"Before you start into an operation, you train the person how to control their blood flow. It can be amazing. If the person starts to bleed heavily you can actually say to them, 'Stop that bleeding', and the person will actually stop the bleeding. You can control much more of the symptoms in the body than most people realise, provided you don't let opposing thoughts go in there. You have to be congruent all in one direction with the training."

Is there not an ethical point that if performance-enhancing drugs are banned by sports authorities why allow performance-enhancing hypnotherapy?

"There's no doubt it would enhance performance," Quinn says, "but I don't necessarily use hypnotherapy. We've developed what we think is a different approach. Sports people are all looking for an edge, and it's much safer than taking any kind of drugs. It's really using just your own mind."

"My response is that if something like that is available, then probably more and more people in the sport are going to use it. Some people have a greater ability to control pain, control recovery, control their energy, than others. It will still depend on the person's mental make-up."

Quinn said that he and Collins were attempting to limit the amount of damage the boxer suffered, but he added: "Having said that, no one can guarantee that you're going to win a fight. That would be nonsense. Nor could they guarantee that you're not going to be knocked out, or that you're not even going to be hurt. But from my clinical experience it seems to be the safest way to go in there."

The anti-boxing lobby, supported by the number of recent ring deaths and crippling in-



Tony Quinn (right) working in the corner with Steve Collins

Photograph: Allsport

juries, would question that there is any safe way. Is there a chance that Quinn will come to regret his involvement in a brutal business?

"Steve and I both agree that we're not interested in damaging anybody. We're only interested in getting the job done, and we approach it that way. In fact he asks me to put in specific instructions to make sure that he's not particularly damaging anybody, that he just wants to win. He's not in there with the attitude, 'I'm going to murder this person'. That's genuinely true."

"I don't know whether they'll succeed in banning boxing, because then it might go underground, and I think then it can't be supervised, and maybe that's even worse. But I think it will always be with us."

In addition to Collins's physical welfare, Quinn says he

helps the fighter focus his mind on any changes considered necessary to improve his boxing technique. "If, for example, Steve wanted to change his footwork or his punching style I would be told exactly what was required and, in that state of unconscious attention, I would say back to him everything that was going to happen. Once you put all that in there it's almost like a programme that the person then works from. It's a very quick way of learning, that's the simplest way of understanding it."

There is a strong possibility that Collins will fight Nigel Benn, who holds the World Boxing Council title. That is bound to be an eyeball-to-eyeball affair, especially since Benn has used the services of Paul McKenna, the stage hypnotist. Imagine, Quinn in one corner and McKenna in the other.

"According to Paul McKenna, it would be fascinating," Quinn says. "It would be good fun. It would be a great challenge for Steve to fight Nigel Benn. He has a lot of respect for him."

Quinn added: "I was never involved in boxing in my life before Steve approached me after the TV show. I didn't know anything about it. If you had asked me about boxing, the most I could have said to you was, 'Oh, yes, well I think Cassius Clay was the greatest boxer'. I used to think he was very stylish and a joy to watch, but he's just an example of someone who transcended the sport." An example, also, of someone who believed explicitly in his own ability and could reach into the minds of opponents with devastating effect, and yet who still took too many damaging blows.

Unfair slant to World Cup draw

GLENN MOORE

Germany play in South Africa on Friday, with England likely to follow in May. In recent months, Nigeria, Colombia and Japan have all played at Wembley, Romania have played in Brazil and the Japanese hosted Ecuador, Scotland and Saudi Arabia.

Modern jet travel has so shrunk the world that international teams are truly international. Yet Fifa, the game's governing body, remains locked into a regional mentality and tonight's 1998 World Cup draw in Paris will again be split into continental groupings.

This is unnecessary, even unfair. If the 171 competing countries were thrown, seeded, into the same hat, there would be no need of the politicking and horse-trading that accompanies the division of regional spoils. Nor would the finals have to be inflated into a grotesque 32 teams to accommodate the deals.

If the groups were global, Africa's well-founded claims for more qualifiers could be justified in competition - as could Europe's case for pre-eminence. Some regionalisation would be sensible. The likes of San Marino, the Solomon Islands and Macao could play regional preliminaries, just as the FA Cup's early rounds are divided into north and south sections. Money ought not to be a problem, selling the marketing and television rights to the 2002 competition is expected to realise \$2bn (£1.5bn).

Maybe if Lennart Johansson

succeeds in toppling the autocratic Joao Havelange from the presidency of Fifa, the system will change. For now we are stuck with the old and Europe, in particular, will be a qualifying misfire.

Back in the days of velvet bags, England's draw could be predicted: Romania, Lithuania, Latvia, Albania and Azerbaijan - all places beyond the reach of the hooligans. Now, however, Fifa are not even planning to make provision for keeping the former Yugoslav nations apart. In the week, and the city, that Bosnia, Croatia and Serbia (known as Yugoslavia in football terms) are due to sign a peace, they may find themselves drawn together.

England, Scotland and the Republic of Ireland are pooled in the second group of seeds and cannot play each other. Europe will have 14 qualifiers from 49 entrants plus France, who qualify as hosts. They will be divided into nine groups, five of five teams and four of six. Winners qualify along with the best second-placed team. The other eight second-placed teams will be involved in two-legged play-offs. It could mean playing 12 matches to qualify.

"I am a little bit surprised," Terry Venables, the England coach, said yesterday, "that teams would still have to go into a play-off after all that."

Small World Cup Qualifiers: Scotland, Poland, Germany, Spain, Italy, Russia, Norway, Denmark, Netherlands, Sweden, Romania, Portugal, Bulgaria, Switzerland, Czech Republic, England, Republic of Ireland, Scotland, Belgium, Greece, Poland, Turkey, Finland, Slovakia, Austria, Ukraine, Israel, Romania, Lithuania, Netherlands, Ireland, Poland, Iceland, Latvia, Estonia, Hungary, Cyprus, Liechtenstein, Slovenia, Georgia, Yugoslavia, Azerbaijan, Armenia, Belarus, Malta, Macedonia, Luxembourg, Moldova, Azerbaijan, Faroe Islands, Estonia.

Warriors' prospects improve

Ice hockey

Despite being moved and renamed, Whitley Warriors, now Newcastle Warriors, have hardly had the best of starts. The crowds are holding up but the results (one win and one draw from 12 games) have seen the side rooted to the bottom of the table, writes Steve Pinder.

The visit of Humberstone Hawks looked like another

match to mark down as an away win.

Warriors led 4-1, but they have been in this position before and collapsed. Humberstone's siege on Kevin Dean looked like the beginning of the end. But he held out, the tide turned and Warriors scored five without reply to lead 9-1. Newcastle won 11-4, and although still bottom they looked like a team who had turned the corner. Results, Sporting Digest, page 27

TODAY'S FIXTURES

Football

7.30 unless stated
INTERNATIONAL FRIENDLY
England v Portugal (8.0)
(at Wembley stadium)

FA CUP SECOND-ROUND REPLAYS
Derbyshire v Rochdale (7.45)
Sheff Wednesday v South Shields
Walsall v Torquay (7.45)
Woking v Bafford (7.45)
at Wycombe Wanderers FC

Premier League
Preston v Southampton & N v Oxford Town
Tottenham v Arsenal
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SPORT



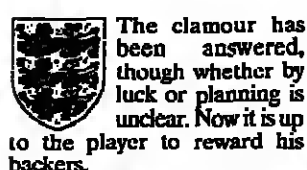
'Sports people are all looking for an edge, and it's much safer than taking any kind of drugs' Tony Quinn, hypnotherapist, on his role as mind trainer to world super-middleweight boxing champion Steve Collins

Page 26

FOOTBALL: England coach selects prolific Newcastle centre-forward to play alongside Shearer against Portugal tonight

Ferdinand is handed his chance at last

GLENN MOORE



The clamour has been answered, though whether by luck or planning is unclear. Now it is up to the player to reward his backers.

Les Ferdinand, the Newcastle United figurehead and Toon Army totem, starts an England match for the first time under Terry Venables tonight. The opponents at Wembley are Portugal, but it is the identity of his partner which is more interesting. Alan Shearer, England's regular centre-forward.

With more than 40 goals between them this season the pairing clearly has much to recommend it. Whether Shearer and Ferdinand dovetail as smoothly as Shearer and Sheringham, or Ferdinand and Beardsley, remains to be seen.

Venables' decision to put the Premiership's leading scorers in tandem may have much to do with Teddy Sheringham's injury but it was by no means his only option. Peter Beardsley or Nick Barmby could have played in Sheringham's linking role and

Venables insisted he had always intended to play the two Geordie heroes, one born and one adopted, together at some point.

Ferdinand has been in nine of Venables' squads but played only nine minutes, when he replaced Shearer as substitute against the United States in September last year. That was the last time Shearer scored for England, yet he has only missed one of the 10 matches since.

"I was particularly pleased with Alan's performance in the last game," said Venables, referring to the 3-1 win over Switzerland. "I thought he played very well. I have got no qualms about Alan whatsoever and I think I have proved that in my selections. He has played fairly consistently."

"Les has been close for a long time and now his chance has come. He will be under pressure but players have got to be able to deal with pressure. There will be pressure during the European Championships. You have got to take whatever comes your way."

Ferdinand walked out of Wembley after the Switzerland match with the words, "I think my chance has gone", but yesterday he reflected, "I said that in the heat of the moment. It was disappointing to turn up so often and not get involved. In most countries when they get a player scoring a lot of goals he gets in the side."

"I am sure we can work well together but I would like more than one game. Other people have more than one game to have a crack at it but I may not get it."

Ferdinand's fears appeared to be confirmed when Venables, pressed on that point, said: "We have only got one match. This is it and this is his opportunity. That is what competition for places is all about."

The pair will play as "conventional" strikers though Venables will encourage them to "use the width and depth of the field".

There is a danger that the two, who have not played together, will find themselves taking up the same positions. But both have prospered as part of a twin strikeforce: Shearer has done so with Mike Newell at Blackburn this season, Ferdinand did so with Kevin Gallen at QPR last season.

Venables will come the rest of his side today, a series of injuries to midfield personnel having delayed his selection.

The choice of twin strikers enforces a change in his recent policy of playing two wide men. With Steve Stone a near-certain starter this means Steve McNamara is likely to step down.

Two games ago such a move was unthinkable, McNamara having been hailed after his performance against Colombia. But he disappointed against Norway and Switzerland and Stone is now flavour-of-the-month. The level-headed Forest winger will no doubt have noted how quickly fortunes change.

Selection dilemma over Bergkamp, page 26



Terry Venables, the England coach, discusses tactics with Stuart Pearce (left) and Steve Stone at Bisham yesterday Photograph: Peter Jay

Wolves smooth McGhee's path

Mark McGhee could be installed as the new manager at Wolves.

Chairman Martin George had originally asked Villa for £1.5m for McGhee, but the eventual figure was never made public.

McGhee left Reading for Leicester last December, and was on course to give the club a Premiership return until his walk-out last week after speculation linking him with the vacancy at Wolves.

George says he has rejected the resignation, but the likes of Mike Walker, Trevor Francis, Lennie Lawrence and Russell

Osman are already being linked with the Leicester job.

Manchester United's big guns are on the way back, meanwhile, with two of Saturday's missing six set to face Celtic in Paul McGee's sell-out testimonial in Glasgow tomorrow night.

Goalkeeper Peter Schmeichel has recovered from surgery on his inflamed elbow and Ryan Giggs should be fit after missing the last two Premiership games with an ankle injury.

Gary Pallister is having treatment to his back injury, Roy

Keane is still not ready to play, Denis Irwin is with the Republic of Ireland and Nicky Butt is suspended, but manager Alex Ferguson is taking all available first team members to Glasgow.

The United boss is hoping to use the game as preparation for Sunday's clash with Liverpool at Anfield and expects a competitive match.

"It'll be passionate, because they are Scottish, and they'll be trying like nothing on earth to beat us," said Ferguson. "But that is nothing unusual. It is a game between two great clubs and, hopefully, it will be a

really good night. Ferguson added: "Paul has been a great servant to Celtic. He's been a fabulous player for them, and I hope we can make it a really good night for him."

Celtic manager Tommy Burns paid tribute to his captain. "It's good to see a player like Paul getting his just reward because he was at the club when it went through a barren spell and I feel he is the better for it, both as a man and as a football player," said Burns.

"Over the last couple of months he has gone from strength to strength."

Strachan's advice sends Whelan to Coventry

NICK DUXBURY

Noel Whelan can thank Gordon Strachan for yesterday's £2m move from Leeds United to Coventry City. Ron Atkinson, the City manager, paid out a club record fee for the England Under-21 striker on the advice of Strachan, the former Leeds' midfielder who is now No 2 at Highfield Road.

"It is no secret he is a very good player, but when Gordon joined us he spoke glowingly about the player," said Atkinson.

son, who is looking to spend a further £3m on the Crystal Palace defender Chris Coleman. "In fact he said that if there was one player we should get if we possibly could, it was Noel Whelan. I tried to get him pre-season and then again when we played at Leeds a few weeks ago. I must admit I was surprised they let him go this time, but they have laid out some money to buy in players."

Whelan is likely to make his debut alongside Dion Dublin against Aston Villa on Saturday. The Nottingham Forest

winger Ian Woan has agreed to sign a new contract after making his peace with manager Frank Clark.

Woan, who was dropped by Clark for Sunday's game with Aston Villa after criticising the club's contract offer and writing off Forest's UEFA Cup hopes, will sign a four-year deal within the next few days.

"I'm delighted at the way things have turned out," Clark said. "Ian and I sat down and sorted out the football side of things and then came to an agreement over the contract."

The matter is over as far as I'm concerned. Dropping him was punishment enough."

Sheffield Wednesday's £4m signing of the Red Star Belgrade duo Darko Kovacevic and Dejan Stefanovic has been given the go-ahead by the Department of Employment.

Wednesday yesterday announced that work permits had been granted - seven weeks after a deal between the clubs had been agreed. The pair, who are both 21 and Yugoslavian internationals, are due at Hillsborough on Thursday and will

watch the match against Leeds on Saturday.

Birmingham have withdrawn from a deal to sign Barcelona midfielder Ronnie Ekelund after failing to agree terms with the Danish international.

The Queen's Park Rangers unsettled midfielder Ned Zelic in a loan move that could lead to a permanent transfer. Alan Thompson has been ruled out of Bolton's plans until February after becoming the third player at the club to require a hernia operation.

England A call for ball inspection

Cricket

England A 199 and 62-2
Pakistan A 300

England A's management asked umpires Iftikhar Malik and Feroz Butt to inspect the match ball last night after Pakistan A reduced their side to 62 for 2 in the third Test at Peshawar.

Shahid Nazir, who removed Nick Knight in a dangerous spell, has swung the ball far more than England's quick bowlers, but that is probably because he is a more natural swing bowler than either Dean Hedley or Ed Giddens.

England A begin the final day of the three-match series, which they lead 1-0, 39 runs behind and with a nervy session or two to see out before they can be sure of the draw that would start victory celebrations.

The delegation which visited the umpires' room after close of play - captain Hussain, cricket manager John Embury and tour manager Mike Vickins - were also seeking clarification on how the officials are policing the problem of shadows across the pitch thrown by close fielders late in the day. Nightwatchman Ian Salisbury was caught at short leg by a ball from off-spinner Akram Raza which pitched right in the area of shadow caused by that same fielder.

But it is the ball enquiry which is potentially controversial in a series which has so far been free of the sort of wrangles which have plagued recent England-Pakistan contests. On what is the first tour here since the infamous 1987 trip it can only inflame Pakistani sensibility that questions were asked the first time England A have been under any sort of pressure.

The umpires reported later that there were no problems with the ball, a verdict which was apparently accepted by the England A management, although they did not wish to comment officially on the incident.

Yesterday Asif Mujtaba, the Pakistan A captain, took his outstanding innings to an unbeaten 147 as the home team battered 0 to 300 all out, a lead of 101. After an opening stand of 56, Nazir followed up his first innings 6 for 64 by having Knight bow for 15. When Salisbury fell, Shaun Udal was sent in as a second nightwatchman to join Jason Gallian, undefeated on 42.

Fourth day of five: Pakistan A won their England A First Test by 199 (5 P Oulter 66, N V Knight 55, Shahid Nazir 6-40).
PAKISTAN A - First innings (Overnight: 207 for 6)
Asif Mujtaba not out 147
Nazir 147
Salisbury 6 for 64
Udal 42
Gallian 42
Shahid Nazir 6-40
England A - Second innings (Overnight: 199 and 62-2)
N V Knight 55, Shahid Nazir 6-40
J R Embury not out 147
I R Gallian not out 42
I O Salisbury 6-64
Shahid Nazir 6-40
England A - Third innings (Overnight: 199 and 62-2)
Asif Mujtaba not out 147
Nazir 147
Salisbury 6 for 64
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Top rider's pot arrest

Equestrianism

The American Bruce Davidson, one of the world's top three-day event riders, was arrested in Auckland yesterday and charged with possession of cannabis.

Police arrested the 35-year-old Davidson, who won Badminton in May, at Auckland International Airport after sniffer dogs singled him out.

Davidson appeared in the Otahuhu District Court later in the day charged with possession of cannabis, a police statement said. He was bailed to reappear in court next week.

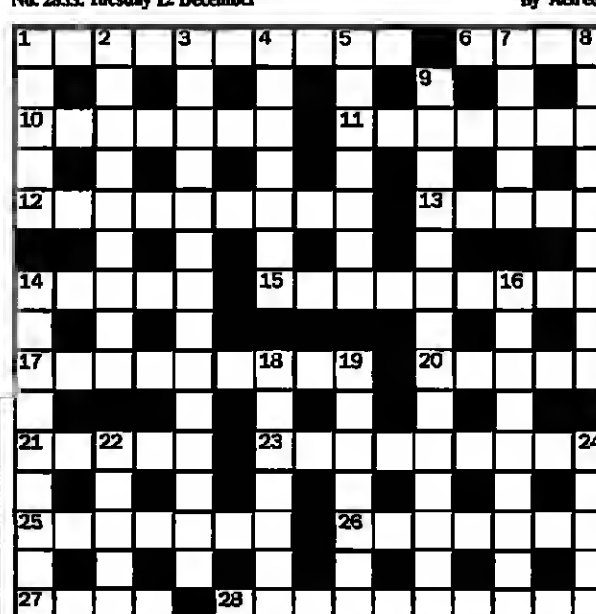
A former Olympic team gold and silver medalist, Davidson was world champion in 1974 and '78 and was the world's top-ranked rider in 1993. He was in Auckland for the Puhimui three-day event this weekend.

THE INDEPENDENT CROSSWORD

No. 2855, Tuesday 12 December

By Achrel

Monday's Solution



ACROSS
1 Union helper could be found amid debris (10)
6 Mark senior's about a hundred and one (4)
10 Composer boor shakes with racket (7)
11 Crowd accepts a pound for weapon (7)
12 Record one's hysterical mirth seeing old calculator? (9)
13 Ointment to give a lifeline to about 50 (5)
14 Extract money from maid-joining weird cult (5)
15 Teacher's pointed condemnation of pupil? (6,3)
17 Concierge is one concerned about misuse of tank (9)
20 Broadcasting in a state of ecstasy (2,3)
21 There's nothing like one's fertile place (5)

DOWN
23 Is familiar with calm reporting which saves a bit of face? (4,5)
25 Experienced person's cards already played? (3,4)
26 Opeo-handed treatment in big ship (7)
27 Long hair reported to principal (4)
28 I'm for a boy, a learner, being dispassionate (10)

DOWN
1 Leaderless rabble could be causing this? (5)
2 Abnormal Irish artist's weapon must be turned down (9)
3 Leader tests out person who is distinguished politically (5,9)
4 Made official record of very small diamonds (7)

DOWN
5 To be active before one in pub is cruel (7)
7 About to use rod and basket (5)
8 Embarrassed to scatter vegetable (3,6)
9 Mender of broken bones in Trojan war? (7,2,5)
14 One reptile, large, kept by 2000 men as epitome of universe (9)
16 After church one male reformed, one well known for change (9)
18 We're united by this as all animals? (7)
19 Determine to find a different answer? (7)
22 Irishman going round Germany in US vehicle (5)
24 A hold-up in renegotiation of lease (5)

ACROSS
1 Union helper could be found amid debris (10)
6 Mark senior's about a hundred and one (4)
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